

The Penny Philanthropist

A Story That Could Be True

By

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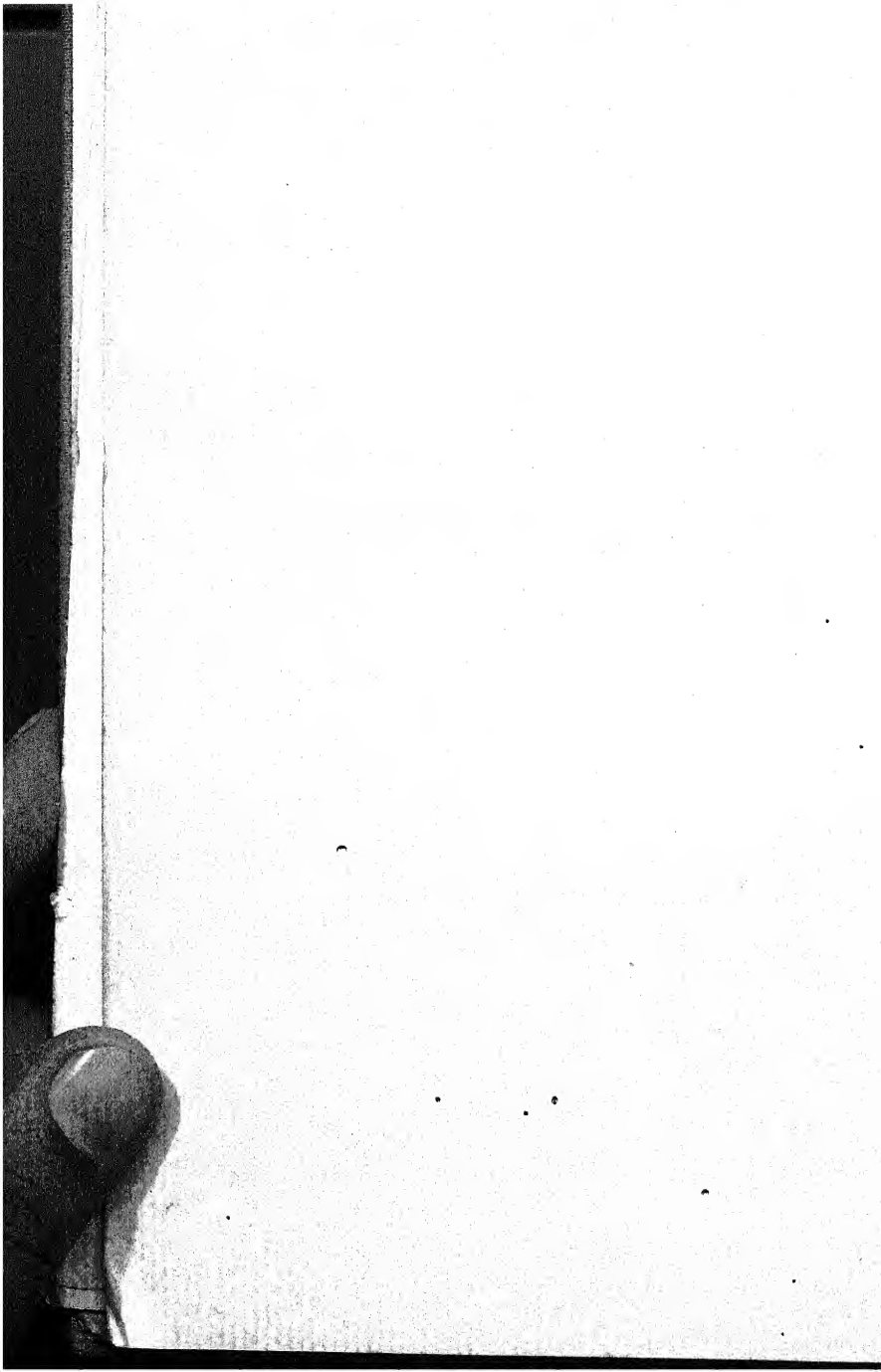
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I

*In Which We Are Mainly Descriptive—But I
Hope You'll Read It; Because There Won't
Be Any More Like It, And This Wouldn't
Be Here If It Could Have Been Left Out*

IF this story had been written in the long-ago, it would have begun: "Gentle reader, do you know Halsted Street?" But if you were a gentle reader you probably would not have known Halsted Street; and if it were long ago, you could not have known it. For when it was the fashion to begin stories in that way, Chicago was not on the map.

True to the brisker fashion of story-telling to which I am bred, I was about to begin: "A light snow had been falling since three o'clock, and at five-thirty, Halsted Street still had a comparatively untrodden appearance"—indeed, I had actually so begun and was well under way with my tale, when I was confronted by one of those challenging questions which are forever bobbing out of a writer's critical mind to make him think despairingly

ill of the things that have just bobbed out of his creative fancy.

"What will that mean to most readers?" urged this unanswerable disturber. "Why, so far as they can be expected to know, should not snow that has been falling on Halsted Street since three o'clock still look comparatively untrodden at five-thirty? How many persons who read stories have any reason to know Halsted Street as so continuously busy a thoroughfare that snow could not lie on it untrodden enough to show individual footprints, except between 3 A. M., when night is over for some, and 5:30 A. M., when day is beginning for others?"

Why, indeed? If my story were concerned with people on Whitechapel Road or on The Bowery, I could do with less explanation. Perhaps there will come a day when Halsted Street may be as self-descriptive. But, for the present, I am sure I shall do better if I explain that Halsted Street, which claims to be the longest street in the world and is certainly one of the most cosmopolitan, is the main artery of Chicago life for many hundreds of thousands of citizens. For a single carfare you may traverse on it, without change of cars, an American city of com-

fortable, cultivated, middle-class folk ; a German city second in population only to Berlin ; a Polish city second only to Warsaw ; an Italian city, a city of Russian Jews, a city of Greeks, a city of Irish, a city of Bohemians, and—still nearing the Stock Yards—a city of Lithuanians ; and so on.

At Randolph Street is the wide, open space still called The Haymarket, though now, by nine or ten o'clock nights, laden market wagons begin to wend thither from the truck farms north and south and west, and at midnight the available space is packed, while sleeping forms sprawl or huddle (according to season) on loads of carrots and cabbages. At three, the produce market is in full activity.

This is the heart of Chicago's Whitechapel district. All around here live men and women to whom there are no unknown depths of degradation. The last stand of the hope-abandoned, en route to Potter's Field, is hereabouts. Pawn-shops and grogeries abound. The buildings are, for the most part, little and mean and low—many of them mere wooden rookeries. Cheap hotels are on every hand ; and two blocks south, Halsted Street crosses Madison—a busier thoroughfare, more like The Bowery, with

banks and theatres and easy-payment emporiums, and lodging-houses overflowing with unemployed, and unemployable, men.

Three more blocks to the south, one comes to Jackson Boulevard, a wide, asphalted street which is the main artery for carriage and automobile circulation east and west.

Down Halsted Street from the north—from the purlieu of aristocracy on the Lake Shore—come the limousines of manufacturers whose enormous “works” are in the huge industrial territory Halsted Street traverses; and the limousines of their wives and daughters en route to Hull-House (now probably the most celebrated Social Settlement in the world) to “study conditions,” as present fashion decrees. And across Halsted Street, on Jackson Boulevard, come others of like sort, from the business and shopping centres and from the residential sections and suburbs of the West Side.

A vortex of humanity, that particular section of Halsted Street where our Peggy has her background—not far from The Haymarket and its near-by dens, nor yet from the haunts of the workless and despondent; but in the path of the passing prosperous.

Now that you know the general character of that part of Halsted Street, I hope you

may without too much difficulty draw a mental picture of a small section of it on a chill mid-December morning towards six o'clock :

On the corner is Neeley's saloon ; thirty feet north of the corner is a narrow door over which a sign says, " Family Entrance." Neeley bought the sign along with the lease and the license and the bar fixtures—and the lettering on the windows which says, " Family Trade a Specialty," although everybody knows how far from " family trade " Neeley's specialty is.

Martinelli's coffee stall or lunch counter comes next : a long, narrow store furnished with a counter and stools, and serving day and night the simplest refreshments.

The house adjoining Martinelli's on the north is of red brick, two-story and basement, with a high wooden "stoop." Years ago when it was new—just after the Chicago fire—it was the all-but-pretentious home of some well-to-do family. Then came declining fortunes : boarding-house, first ; then lodging-house ; then tenement. The front basement room has a wee shop, now—Peggy's. " Who-iver," as she says, "'d of thought I'd git to be the owner of a daypartmint store : wan daypartmint fer newspapers, an' wan fer

maggyzines, an' wan fer chewin'-gum, an' wan fer stamps?" Behind the shop, a kitchen living-room, and a tiny bedroom, which I suspect was once the kitchen pantry; these are Peggy's home.

On the other side of Peggy's shop is a store where Levinsky deals, none too briskly, in workmen's apparel: corduroys and jeans; cowhide shoes and leather gloves; hickory shirts and heavy socks—and such gear.

Peggy has never known any other environment than this. She has sold papers on this corner since she was six years old: first as a stray merchant with her stock under her arm; then from a curbstone stand; and now, if you please, from what she calls an "importorium." She seldom goes far from here. Why should she, when all the world comes to her?

All else that I thought I must surely say about Peggy before you see her I have written and rewritten—and thrown away. She speaks best for herself. But to understand her you must know the conditions whose product she is.

Now, then! We shall have the light snowfall and those footprints—and no more topography. And I am glad that you are to have a chance to meet her for your first

time in the dawn of a new day—for days get soiled quickly, on Halsted Street—and in the whiteness of a fresh snowfall which heavy and heedless feet have not yet begun to trample into mire.

II

In Which We Get None Too Briskly Started, And The Hero Appears

IT is dark as night at 6 A. M. in mid-December; but by that time lights have begun to shine here and there in dwelling windows, for factory whistles blow at seven.

As McGarigle came down Halsted Street, though, swinging his night-stick, there were few signs of dawning day. A light burned behind the drawn blinds of Neeley's; but the doors were not yet unlocked. And Martinelli's was as it had been since one o'clock: half-illuminated, and the Italian cat-napping behind his coffee-urn.

McGarigle stopped in front of Peggy's. By her door was a wooden box with a padlock. Carriers left her papers here on their early-morning rounds; and McGarigle tapped the lock with his stick, making sure that it was fast.

Then he strolled on to Martinelli's window, where he rapped.

"Hey, Dago!" he called, sticking his head

in at the door. "Wake up; er some wan'll be stalein' a doughnut off ye."

Suddenly very wide awake, Martinelli smiled—as one who knew the improbability of such a theft.

"You try," he invited significantly, and not without a glint of subtle humour—which McGarigle ignored.

Standing in front of his window and at a right angle to it so as to catch the eyes of passers up and down, Martinelli had a double-faced sign with a legend whose main purport was :

Coffee and 3 doughnut	5c.
Coffee and 3 roll	5c.
Coffee and piece of pie	5c.
Hot Frankfurter Sandwich	5c.
Hot Fried Egg Sandwich	5c.

In a space above the legend hung three cards reading, respectively, Breakfast, Lunch, Supper.

Martinelli came out, now, and slipped the Supper card from the top to the bottom of the pile on each face of the board, so that whether northbound or southbound, in his haste or his unbroken leisure, his early-rising or his late-returning, the passer-by might know a new day was begun.

McGarigle watched this proceeding with

an interest which years of familiarity with it had increased rather than abated.

"I see Peggy 've got her new sign," he observed, looking at it.

Martinelli smiled with an interest almost proprietary.

"Got yeste'day," he said.

"'News Emporium,'" laughed McGarigle, reading it. "Ain't she the great wan? I bet she's proud! I've known that kid since she sold her first armful o' papers on this corner—whin she was six, an' looked *three*. That was just after her pa took Frinch l'ave—before Petie was born. Say!" McGarigle was made reminiscent by the sign. "Them kids an' their ma had tough pullin' to kape alive. No wonder the mother give out. If ever a hard-workin' woman starved to death, she did. An' now here's that morsel of a Peg, fatherin' an' motherin' the other two as fine's you please, an' runnin' what she calls an 'imporium'!"

"Peggy run the street," said Martinelli, proudly.

"Sure she does! Ain't she Irish? Why wouldn't she run a bunch o' Yiddishers an' dagoes? Say! Ye know ye're obstructin' the sidewalk wid that sign—violatin' the ordinance! Five dollars fine—if I rayport it."

Martinelli grinned. "A' right," he replied ; and entered his shop where he drew McGarigle a hot coffee and passed it out to him with a plate of doughnuts.

Lights, meanwhile, had begun to glimmer in Levinsky's ; and presently the door opened and Levinsky came out. He might easily have alarmed an uninitiated and nervous person ; for he was dragging, rather savagely, an unresisting gentleman wearing a bearskin overcoat. McGarigle, gulping down his coffee, watched with amusement the familiar ceremony as Levinsky jerked the man ungently to his small black feet, and fastened to the store-front with a padlock a chain which came down through the sleeves of the fur coat. Flapping on the breast of the enduring one was a very dirty sign which read : "Sale Price! \$9.93."

"H'lo, Solomon !" the policeman called. "Snow to-day ; maybe ye'll sell that coat."

Levinsky grunted unbelievably.

"How many years you had it ?"

"Four."

"Motormen don't need 'em no more ; an' tamesters can't be bothered wid 'em. What y' ought to do is, take that up on the Nort' Side an' label it 'Fer outdoor sl'apin'.' It'd sell quick !"

Levinsky looked the scorn he felt for the commercial sense of the Irish.

"Why don'd you go een beesness?" he asked, sarcastically. "You know so much about!"

McGarigle handed the cup back to Martinelli and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand.

"Ye're violatin' the ord'nance wid that dummy," he reminded.

Levinsky glared black hate, went into his shop and almost instantly emerged with a pair of shoe-laces which he thrust at McGarigle.

Martinelli, looking on interestedly, grinned; and McGarigle struggled to keep from doing likewise.

"I told ye the las' time," he charged Levinsky, "that I ain't no centypede."

"Save them an' go een beesness!" Levinsky suggested, ironically; "on the Nord Side!"

Then McGarigle remembered that he was travelling a beat—and resumed his journey.

He had been gone but a minute or two when a young man came down Halsted Street from the north, paused a moment—as if irresolute—before Levinsky's, passed on to Peggy's and, in evident disappointment to

find her stand empty, stepped to her shop door and listened. Then he went into Martinelli's, and straddled a stool.

Martinelli looked surprised. "Early—to-day!" he commented, with a questioning inflection.

"Yes," answered the young man, in an uncommunicative tone.

"Got job?" the Italian pursued.

"No."

"You sleep yet," was Martinelli's unoffended conclusion, as he drew a cup of coffee and passed it to the young man with a plate of rolls—minus butter or any substitute for it.

The young man was a good-looking fellow, with the beauty of wholesome youth. Even to the least-observing eye, he was no product of Halsted Street, although not an unfamiliar type there; for fine, eager young soldiers of fortune newly come from country and small town to attack the city's strongholds of Opportunity not infrequently find their first associations among the down-and-outs; there are no cheap lodgings which invite "The Young and Hopeful Only."

As this young man is our hero, it may be as well to say that he looked about four-and-twenty; that he was of an average height

and build; that his hair and eyes were brown, his teeth and complexion exceptionally fine, his clothes pretty good as to original quality but showing signs of long wear, and that the most significant thing about him was none of the foregoing details but the general air he carried—an air of doggedness, of being already at odds with the world, of having lost faith in his power to win.

Now, having met the hero, you shall meet Peggy!

III

In Which You Find Out Quite a Bit About Peggy

A GAS jet flared suddenly in Peggy's "imporium," the door opened, and out into the dark and chill and snow came a small boy, yawning prodigiously, digging his knuckles into his reluctant-to-open eyes, and otherwise expressing the merest semi-awakeness. He bent to unlock the box and get out his papers for delivery; and as by magic his lax, unenergetic little form stiffened into electrified alertness.

"Tracks!" he whispered, mysteriously; and got down to measure and differentiate them with a wise eye—the other was squinted shut. "Tracks!"

Peggy called him, but he did not hear. When she came to the door he rose up and faced her.

"There's been robbers here!" he said, more delighted than distressed. "Two of 'em! Look!" He pointed to the footprints in the snow.

"Are the papers gon'?" Peggy cried in alarm.

As if that were, after all, of minor interest, Petie tried the lock. It was fast.

"No," he replied indifferently. "But," with renewed eagerness, "I b'leeve it was on'y one robber, an' McGarigle chasin' him. Them big feet is McGarigle's ——"

"Petie!" cried Peggy, comically, as she stooped to unlock the box. "I ruther be robbed wanst in a while than scairt every day wid yer sleuthin'. Here!" handing him his papers. "Away wid ye an' maybe ye kin ketch thim. In anny case, ye're sure to ketch McGarigle."

Muttering indignation because his science was so little appreciated, Petie took himself off on his delivery round. And when he was gone, Peggy stood smiling after him—a dear little whimsical, wistful smile that was motherly as with ages of experience, and childish with teasing fun.

You want a picture of Peggy? Well, she was a wisp of a wee thing, turned eighteen and tipping the butcher's scale at some eighty-odd pounds. She stood four-feet-ten in her Sunday shoes, and her tously hair was nondescript but inclined to be reddish, while her eyes were so full of dancing lights that hardly any one could say what their colour was. I'm not even sure that I know. Per-

haps they were gray; perhaps they were blue. I can't swear for a certainty that they may not have been hazel. The tiny hands of Peg were red and roughened from exposure and hard work; and the baby-size feature which served her for a nose was lightly powdered with pale-brown freckles. Her mouth was merry and sweet, and her brogue was rich and rolling—what little schooling she had snatched had not sufficed to make her commonplace, even in her accent or her idiom. She was wearing a plaid skirt the original hues of which were unguessable, but its predominating tone at present was a greenish brown; the skirt flared about her ankles, and had a bunchy fullness in the back that suggested the services of a large safety-pin. Her short, thick jacket was also weather-worn as to colour and antiquated as to style. And on her head Peggy wore a close-fitting knitted cap such as small boys often wear.

When Petie was out of sight she set briskly to work to whisk her outdoor stand free of snow. This stand was in the shelter of the high "stoop," and from behind it Peggy could hand papers to passers-by without bringing them a step out of their hurrying way. She kept her wares on it all day in

good weather, and during the morning and evening rush hours only when it was wet or cold.

Almost at once, her neighbours stood framed in their respective doorways. Peggy saw Martinelli first.

"The top o' the mornin'!" she called to him, cheerily.

"Night, yed!" observed Levinsky from beside the bearskin coat.

"Mornin' when you come," said Martinelli to Peggy, with Latin gallantry.

"An' a cold day," Peggy retorted, laying out her papers, "whin you can't throw a bokay. Have you throwed wan at Levinsky?"

Martinelli grinned.

"Come, now," Peggy demanded of Levinsky. "Where's me smile to begin the day wid?"

Levinsky smiled wanly; the attempt seemed honest; but any less of a smile would have been no smile at all.

"G'wan!" Peggy cried mirthfully. "Stretch yer face, Solomon! Make it a good wan, er ye'll fergit how. Sure, it's the on'y practice ye give yerself. I'm gittin' discour'ged wid you. Honest, I am!"

"Bad times," he murmured, shaking his grizzled head.

"On'y wan way to make 'em better," she retorted. "Times that's bad fer makin' money is sure to be grand fer givin' it away."

But at the introduction of so idle a theme, Levinsky remembered that he had obligations within doors.

Peggy was gazing proudly up at her new sign when the young man, having hastily finished his coffee and rolls, came out of Martinelli's.

"Are you late or early?" she laughed; but there was a telltale self-consciousness in her manner.

"Early," he replied; and putting his hand in a pocket produced a copper which he laid on the stand and helped himself to a paper.

"You must have lost somethin' yeste'day," Peggy hazarded, "by gittin' to it five minutes late."

"I didn't get that close to anything," he answered; and seemed about to go—not because he wanted to, but because he was ashamed of his "blues."

Peggy tugged at his sleeve, wistfully. "Kin ye spare it?" she asked.

He knew she meant the penny; but he pretended not to understand. "What do you mean?" he said stiffly.

Peggy was not easily rebuffed; she seemed

to realize that human need must make its brief little last stand behind pride before it opens the heart's door to sympathy.

"All right," she replied quickly, as if turning it off. "On'y, a cent's a good dale, sometimes, jest fer to look in a paper whin ye're huntin' a job. An' I don' mind."

"Mind what?"

"Mind if ye look an' don' pay. It don't hurt the paper none."

"I shouldn't think that was very good business for you," he observed, impersonally.

Peggy laughed. "I don't nade *all* the money in the world to make me happy. An' I seem to git on. I always tear the Help Wanted's out o' wan paper, night an' mornin', an' kape 'em here to be looked at widout pay. At first I used to put by a paper fer it. But I don't have to: there's always some customer that I kin ask, 'D' ye nade a job?' An' whin they say, 'No,' I give thim the paper wid all thim onnecessary jobs left out. They'd on'y throw that part away. An' I hate to think o' that. So manny people waste, every day, what other folks want awful bad. Seems like there ought to be better management."

"I wish you could take your ideas and work them out in some of the great big ways

they're needed," he commented, with a warmth that was *not* impersonal.

Peggy shook her head. "Not me!" she declared. "I got as much as I kin do to kape 'em goin' right here. An' I guess that maybe if everybody'd git busy wid thim ideas on his own job, instead o' thinkin' how grand he could use 'em if his job was bigger, it'd help consid'able."

"You bet it would!" he cried. "I wish they could all know you. Then they'd be ashamed *not* to try!"

"Well, that's beyond you or me," she answered. "What ain't beyond us is the way I manage on my job, an' the way *you* manage on yours. Now, I've us take a look at thim Help Wanted, before me trade gits brisk."

She tore the Want Ad. section from one of her *Tribunes*, and spread it open on her stand.

"Help Wanted: Male," she murmured. "Now, let's see; I don' belave I know what kind of a job you was lookin' fer."

He had bought papers from her rather regularly for the past fortnight or so—since his dwindling funds had driven him to Martinnelli's counter for scant sustenance in the place of meals; but this was the first time he had found Peggy alone for more than a moment

at a time. So, although she knew he was hunting a job, and that he was a newcomer to the city, that was the sum of all about him that she did know.

"I was looking," he answered, "for a place as accountant—bookkeeper. But what I'll probably get is a nice soft job with a *pick*. That's why I'm on the hunt so early. I've quit looking for what I want. It's got to be what I can *get*, now."

"Well," Peggy answered, thoughtfully; "sure I think a job wid a pick's a lot better 'n no job at all. But this is kind o' bad weather fer *picks*. Why don't ye try wan more day before ye give up? Think how manny smart people has died since yister-day! Think how manny folks is wonderin' how they're to git on at all widout the ones that's gon'; an' here's you, that could help 'em, goin' to work wid a pick! Ain't it a pity there's no better ways o' people that nade each other findin' each other out? There was that girl in las' night's paper that drowned herself in the lake yisterday because she couldn' git work. An' lots, whin they heard it, said they'd of been glad to git her. That made me feel awful. Now, l'ave us see. Maybe this's your lucky day."

She turned to the Ad. section and when

she had found the column with bookkeepers in, she began to read :

“ ‘Wanted : By large mercantile house, young man wid brains’—there you are ! Or, here—‘Wanted : Good-appearing young man’ ”—she laughed and shook her head—
“ ‘to sell stock.’ ‘Wanted : Industrious young man’—I suppose ye’re industrious ? ”

He nodded.

“ ‘Fer cashier’s department ; must have unquestionable riputation and riferences.’ ”

“ That lets me out,” he said, bitterly.

Peggy straightened up with a little gasp as of hurt. Then, “ I don’t know what ye mane,” she said slowly, but with conviction, “ but I don’ belave you ever done annything that wasn’—square.”

The young man turned his head away for a moment ; his mouth was quivering and he did not want her to see.

“ I didn’t,” he answered, unsteadily.
“ And neither did my dad. But he’s suffering—and so am I. He’s in—prison ; for embezzling from a bank he was cashier of. It was the president that was crooked—dad was a cat’s-paw—and he didn’t even know. But the president knew how to dig himself out of the mess—and he did. Somebody had to suffer—so dad ——”

"An' ye couldn' do a thing?" Peggy cried, indignantly.

"Not a thing! The president had the biggest creditor behind him. We appealed to this man—but he wouldn't answer. He's here, in Chicago. I came here to try to see him. But I couldn't get near him! When I'd been to his place a dozen times, they threatened to arrest me if I came again. I wrote him some letters, then, and told him what I thought of him and that it'd be my joy in life to see him get what's coming to him. But I don't suppose he ever even saw the letters!"

"You wouldn' think there could be a man that mane," Peggy declared.

"You don't know how heartless money makes men," he retorted. "Those millionaires have no heart in them. How could they? If they had hearts of pity, or consciences, they couldn't be millionaires!"

"Oh, I don' know," Peggy demurred. "Some of 'em does lots o' good——"

"Aw!" he cried, desperately, "what does it amount to? A drop in the bucket! They don't miss it, and how many does it help? If they did even half what they could, the world would be a different place to live in."

"Sure that's true of more than million-

aires," observed Peggy, sagely. "But everybody wants to put it up to Mr. Carneejie. What d' *you* do?"

He laughed, bitterly. "Me? What could I do? I'm broke!"

"Ye've got that cent I didn't l'ave ye spend fer a paper," she reminded.

He thought she was jesting. "What could I do with a cent?"

"Did ye ever try?"

"No."

"Well, ye've a lot to learn. I usen't to know, nayther. But wan day I seen a little piece in the paper about iverybody wantin' to be rich so they could do more good; but nobody ought to think how much good he'd do wid a lot o' money that wasn't sure he was doin' the most he could wid what he's got. 'I bet that manes me,' I said to meself. I couldn' give much, but whin I got to figgerin' I seen that I could give a cint a day. So I give wan, rain er shine. O' course, the cent don't do much—it's what comes o' lookin' fer some wan, each day, that nades you an' the little you kin do. Try it to-day, an' see. And now let's git back to huntin' a job—wan wheer they kin tell by lookin' at ye the kind of a fella ye are."

IV

In Which the Hero Gets a Job

SO absorbed was Peggy in what the Ads. offered that she did not hear an auto horn honk sharply, nor look up until called by name. Then she started guiltily. Confronting her, amusement twinkling in his deep-set small blue eyes, was a large-framed, heavily-built man of about sixty-five—a man who expressed authority in his every line and movement.

“‘News Emporium,’” he said, reading the sign above Peggy’s head. “This place looks to me more like a reading room. Nothing for *sale*, I suppose?”

“I’m sorry,” Peggy apologized. “I didn’t hear you. We was huntin’ a job.”

“Who for?”

“Fer me friend, here.”

The older man turned to the young one. “What can you do?” he asked. The joking familiarity of his tone in speaking to Peggy changed sharply when he addressed the boy. This was a man who, in his dealings with all the world, stood almost defiantly on the

ground where he demanded that they show him reason why he should consider their existence.

"I'm an accountant," the youth answered. "I've had most of my experience in a bank. But I'm willing to do anything."

The older man looked him over—and, it seemed, through and through—shrewdly. "Expert accountants need not be 'willing to do anything,'" he observed, dryly. "And they don't usually look for work on Halsted Street."

The boy flushed. "I'm not expert," he said. "I live over here because it is cheap. And I've *got* to be willing to do anything."

As if he had not even heard the boy's defense, the man continued, looking him in the eye: "It isn't drink." He was not questioning; he was announcing his own conclusions which were seldom at fault; so seldom that he was what he was: a commander of men.

"No, sir," the youth declared, curtly.

"Nor dope," the examiner continued, still speaking as to himself. "Dishonesty? Hm! Do you stand for him, Peggy?"

"Sure I do!" she cried.

"She doesn't know anything about me," the boy interposed, "except what I've told

her—and that isn't much. I've never exchanged a dozen sentences with her until just now."

The man made a fumbling motion as if to feel in his pockets for card and pencil ; but his overcoat was buttoned. He was not one to waste energy.

"Give me a piece of paper and a pencil, Peggy," he commanded.

Peggy tore a strip of margin from the Help Wanted sheet ; the youth supplied a pencil with which the man made a few scrawls.

"Take this out to the head bookkeeper's office at my plant about eight o'clock," he said, handing the strip of paper to the boy. "No use going earlier—I'm the only person that gets there as early as this. Now, Peggy, where are my papers?"

There was that in the man's tone which dismissed the boy more effectually than many another could have done it with sharp-spoken command.

"I thank you, sir," the boy began. But the man made a gesture of impatience.

When the youth was out of ear-shot, though, Peggy spoke for him—and for herself. She had been watching the transaction intently, little disturbed or distracted by her

few earliest customers who threw their coppers on her stand and snatched up the papers they wanted.

"I guess," she observed, sagely, "ye have yer own fun—after all."

He knew what she meant, and smiled. One of the things about Peggy that had kept this man her delighted customer since she had been in business—kept him coming to her whenever he could for his papers, not at all in a benevolent spirit, but because she amused and interested him—was her complete absence of undue regard for his wealth. There were not many persons in the world whose feeling for him had nothing whatever to do with his power; this child was one of the few. Sometimes he inclined to think she was the only one he knew. When his soul was sour with sycophancy, he thought of Peggy as a stifling man thinks of a cool breeze: of Peggy, to whom no one was anything except as she saw him, and who had a frank, merry preference for her own life as compared with what she surmised his to be.

"Don't stop feeling sorry for me," he answered. "I don't have half as much as you do. You think it's fun for me to be able to scratch a few words on a bit of paper

and give a fellow what he wants. Isn't that it?"

She nodded.

"I used to think it would be a great feeling—when I was chasing it; but hardly anything's a great feeling when you've caught up with it, Peg."

She laughed up at him roguishly. "Then why d' ye run so hard?" she teased.

Why, indeed? He shook his head. "It gets to be a habit," he said, more to himself, reflectively, than in explanation to her. "Like automobile speeding: you don't care about being at any place—but you want to get there quick."

"I know," she agreed, gravely. "That's why I sold me car."

He chuckled with appreciation of her drollery. "Never let anything interfere with your enjoyment of life; do you, Peg? How's the penny philanthropy coming on?"

"Fine! Why don't ye try it?"

Smiling, he shook his head. "I couldn't make it work. But I'll tell you what I thought of: I'll give you a dollar a day to give for me."

"What d' ye want to do that fer?" she demanded. "What good'll that be doin' you?"

"Why, I'd have the fun of knowing what a lot of good you were doing with it."

She laughed. "I've read in the papers that ye're dippy about secon'-hand stuff," she teased, referring to his mania for antiques; "but, lan' sakes! I didn' know you liked aven your *fun* secon'-hand. Why don't ye give it yerself?"

"Because you know how so much better than I do," he retorted.

"*That's* all right," she admitted; "but I couldn' undertake it. 'Tis a rale raysponsibility to give away a cint a day, an' give it right. I couldn' tackle a dollar. Why, all the con games on the West Side'd be after me, if they knew I had that much money. I'd have to kape a private seckeratary—an' I don't keer fer them, knowin' all yer business. I don' suppose annybody ever asks you fer a dollar—do they?"

"Hardly ever. Usually for a college or a hospital or a library, or else for a chicken farm or a parlour organ or a musical education."

"An' you tell yer seckeratary to send 'em the college er else write 'em that yer supply o' parlour organs has gave out?"

"That's it. I believe you used to do that way yourself—you seem to know it so well."

"I did," she answered, unsmilingly; "an' sure, 'tis no fun at all. Go on wid it, if ye gotta kape that seckeratary busy. But why don' ye try the other, too? I'll help ye all I kin; on'y ye gotta swear to give it every day. If ye chate by givin' siven dollars wanst a wake, it's all off betwane us."

"I'll try it for a week; and I won't cheat. Now I must get along. My little girl is home, and I'm going to send her in to see you—maybe this morning; she's coming down, presently, to pick me up at the Works and take me down-town."

"This's me day at home," Peggy said.

He turned to go back to his car. A man who had come out of Neeley's a moment before, and had been standing, as if waiting, in front of Martinelli's door, stepped up and spoke in a low tone, but quickly:

"Beg pardon, sir."

"Well?"

"You're Mr. Kimbalton?"

"Yes."

"I'm one of Burns' men. May I speak to you a moment—inside?"

"Come into the news shop."

Peggy's morning trade was not nearly so brisk as that she did in the evening: busy people slept late and left a narrow margin of

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time between bed and bench—too narrow for reading the paper. By and by the idlers would come crawling forth, sated with sleep and looking for such diversion without exertion as the day's news might afford. But unless there was some criminal case of extreme local interest, the morning trade was hardly sufficient to get Peggy up so early were it not that Petie had to be started on his round.

She was hopping from foot to foot in the effort to keep warm, when her young man reappeared.

"Has he gone?"

She nodded towards her shop. "He's in there—talkin' to a man. I'm afraid he's got trouble at the Works."

"Trouble?"

"Yes; ain't ye read about it?"

"I don't know who he is—that's what I came back to find out. I guess he thinks everybody knows him. And I can't make anything of this scrawl except 'Give this young man a chance. O. K.'"

Peggy looked at the paper he handed her. "Not O. K.," she laughed; "*A. K.*—Andrew Kimbalton."

The youth stared. "Was *that* Kimbalton?"

"Yes."

"Let's have another look at those Help WANTEDs," he observed, dryly. "Kimbalton is the man I was telling you about."

Peggy gasped. "Lan' sakes! Well, here's yer chance to git yer case before him."

"That job'll last about one minute, when he finds out who I am."

"I don' belave that; but, annyway, ye don' nade to fire yerself."

"I wish I hadn't written him those bitter letters," the boy sighed, regretfully. "But maybe he didn't see them; maybe this *is* my chance. Anyway, I'm going to try—for dad's sake—and for *yours*!"

Peggy's usual ready answer did not come to this. There was something about this youth that made her self-conscious, shy. She was glad that Mr. Kimbalton's reappearance saved her the necessity of a reply.

Kimbalton seemed pleased to see the youth—as if his being there were opportune.

"Young man," he said, "do you know your way about the city?"

"I can find it, sir."

"Then take this note to that address. If the man isn't there, wait for him. Bring the answer back here to Peggy's shop."

"Yes, sir."

The directions were explicit. The boy took the note, raised his hat deferentially, and hurried away.

"Thanks for your hospitality, Peggy," Kimbalton said, with a preoccupied air. "And you won't mind, will you, if some one comes here for the answer to that note?"

"Not at all. I hope things ain't gittin' bad?"

"Nothing to think about—only some folks can't seem to realize that I run my own business. By the way, what is that young man's name?"

"I'll never tell ye," Peggy laughed; "because I don't know it meself."

V

In Which Peggy Rescues a Crumpled Note

ABOUT six-thirty, or twenty minutes to seven, the factory girls began to hurry by. Nearly always they were sleepy, and winter mornings they were cold. Few of them were dressed warmly, and not a few were breakfastless. Some stopped at Martinelli's long enough to swallow a cup of coffee. Some bought a nickel's worth of bananas from a push-cart, and ate them as they went. Only those who had no job lingered for speech with Peggy and for a look at her free Help Wanted's; the others hurried past. But Peggy, who knew most of them and their interests, had a way of calling out as they passed any news item she thought they would be glad to hear, or any little bit of personal chaff that might amuse them.

"Here y' are!" she cried, as she caught sight of two girls who had spent the evening before in her shop and had discussed with interest one of the day's stories. "Here y' are! All about the elopin' hairress and the

chowfear. Her pa ain't caught thim yet. Hello, Katie! I bet ye're in to-day. Did ye ever," to Levinsky who had reappeared in his doorway, "know Katie's a writer fer the *Tribune*? Sure she is! She has somethin' in Laura Jean's Bleedin' Heart Colyum a'most every day. Oh, say, Ida!" to a swarthy Jewish girl, "Lillian Russell's got a swell wan this mornin': How to be a beautiful blonde, though born a brunette—just think elevatin' thoughts!"

As the latest ones scurried past, Peggy began to be conscious of her hungriness.

"Polly!" she called, stepping to the shop-door; "I'm starvin'. Have ye got the coffee on?"

There was no immediate response; but in a few moments Polly came to the door. She had on a dress-skirt, but clutched with one hand a jacket about her shoulders, as if she were not fully dressed. In the other hand she held a creased black taffeta ribbon.

Polly was sixteen, and quite pretty in a meaningless sort of way. She was larger than Peggy; her hair was a rich, chestnut brown; her eyes were decidedly blue; and her features were regular. But her expression was petulant; traces of frequent sullenness lurked in the droop of her eyelids and of

the corners of her mouth. Polly was Peggy's idol, and that speaks for itself.

"I simply can't tie this nasty old string into a decent bow any more," she said, fretfully.

Peggy looked critically at the offending ribbon. "Couldn' ye iron it?" she suggested.

"Iron!" cried Polly, explosively. "Why, it's ironed to death now. That's what's the matter with it. And it's a measly little old string, anyhow! I'll bet it's the littlest one on any girl in high school."

"I'm sorry, lovey," Peggy crooned, sympathetically. "But you study hard, an' l'arn a lot; an' whin ye git to earnin' big wages wid all yer iducation, ye kin buy yerself bows that'll make ye look like an avvyation meet—er the Wright Brothers come to town."

"I wish I was workin' now," Polly declared. "I'm sick o' school. An' I don't see what good all that x plus y stuff is goin' to do me."

"Well, never havin' l'arned anny of it," Peggy went on, "I can't say. But I know there ain't much kin be done widout it. An' I want you to git on, Polly darlin'. Ye wouldn' wish to be like me—would you? Ign'rant an' showin' it in every word I say."

"No, I wouldn't," Polly admitted, frankly. "And if you tried, and cared, you could talk without bein' so Irish—too!"

Peggy smiled, wistfully. Until now she had never minded her brogue. But "an accountant"—one who, doubtless, knew much of x plus y , whatever that might be—would think scornfully, of course, of one with her uncouth speech.

"I'll be after tryin' harder," she promised. "But do put on the coffee, darlin'—I'm passin' away wid hunger an' cold."

Polly obeyed, moving slowly and as if deeply bored. And Peggy sat down on the stool by her outdoor stand and huddled over a copy of one of the morning papers. She was absorbed in some dramatic incident it told, when the front door at the top of the "stoop" opened, and a girl came out, followed by sounds of angry altercation.

"All right!" the girl called back. "That'll do. You ain't going to lose any more on me." And she came down the steps, hugging the far edge as if to avoid observation from Peggy's corner. Reaching the foot, she started past, walking quickly. But before she had gone more than a few steps, Peggy called to her:

"What's yer hurry?"

Without stopping, the girl called back: "Nothin'."

"Don't ye want to look at the Help Wanteds?"

This girl lodger in one of the tenements above had been stopping regularly, of late, to avail herself of Peggy's free list in her hunt for work.

"No—thanks," she answered.

"Oh!" cried Peggy, delightedly; "did ye git somethin'?"

"No. But I got to go."

"All right!" Peggy replied, cheerfully. "Excuse me fer rubberin'. I just thought that maybe, if you wasn't in a hurry, you'd do me a favour."

"I'd like to," the girl murmured; "but I——"

"Never mind!" Peggy cried. "I had me nerve to ask."

"Why, no you hadn't!" the girl declared. "After all the favours you've done me. I'd like to—what was it you wanted?"

"Jest to know if you'd mind settin' here while I snatch a cup o' coffee. Polly's makin' it."

The girl hesitated—and yielded. "Sure I could! I'd like to pay *some* o' my debts."

"This ain't payin' debts," Peggy demurred.

"This's makin' wan—for me. There ain't likely to be anny wan comin' by, but if ye'll just kape yer eye on me stock—ye ain't had breakfast yet, have ye?"

The girl turned away sharply. "I see," she said. "I might have known it was that. No, thanks. I'm out of a job; but I ain't takin' charity."

"Oh, go on!" Peggy cried. "I *do* nade the stall minded; an' if I *didn't* I'd on'y be doin' what you'd do fer me if things was the other way about. Lan' sakes! manny's the cup o' good hot tea I've had give to me in this very store—in the days whin I peddled on the corner, an' got stiff wid the cold, an' the cobbler's wife used to bring me in an' thaw me out—God rist her soul! It'd be a pity if I couldn't hand on the complymint. Set down, lovey! I won't be gone more'n a minute. An' while ye're mindin' the imporium, ye kin be radein' annything ye see. Rade about that poor girl that took herself off, thinkin' there was no wan to help her; an' all the time the town was full o' thim that'd been glad enough to do it if they'd on'y known."

"That's what they always say," the girl retorted, bitterly, "when they're sure there ain't no danger anybody'll call their bluff."

"Oh, pshaw!" Peggy remonstrated. "There's heaps of folks that want to be kind—on'y they don't know how. You don't want to git to thinkin' that there ain't—like she did, poor thing! You know what I can't ever help thinkin' whin I rade things like that? That if them that goes—like her, you know—had on'y just of waited ever so little longer, they wouldn't have done it. If they could on'y of had some wan to talk things over wid—some wan that wouldn' ack crazy, but'd understand."

The girl sneered. "A grand chance! Where would you find anybody like that?"

Peggy looked thoughtful. "Why, there'd be *some* wan, surely," she said, slowly.

"Well, *who*? Who'd *you* go to before *you'd* do it?"

Peggy was unable to answer.

"That's it!" the girl went on. "There *ain't* any one! There ain't nobody alive, that I ever heard of, whose love of hard-pressed folks you could be sure enough of to go to 'em and say you was in despair. Ain't it queer that, with all the millions and millions some people give to charity, there wouldn't be any one that'd give just love—enough love so no one could ever doubt it?"

"My lan'!" cried Peggy, her eyes shining

with the vision she was seeing. "Wouldn' that be a wonderful thing fer some wan to be? You ought to tell that to everybody ye meet, till ye see can't you maybe find the wan that'll try to be it. An' while ye're lookin' fer that wan, Alma dear, if you should—hear of anny girl that's thinkin' of givin' up the fight—*wan way or the other*—won't ye beg her not to do it till she's come to me. I dunno what I kin do—I'm so little an' ignorunt—but I could win' my arms around her—like this"—she threw her arms about Alma, who was crying in long, shuddering sobs, and held her tight—"an' beg her to try just wanst more—fer *my* sake. Because it might be me that was meant to help her, an' I must have me chanst."

Peggy knew by the way the girl clutched her that she was getting her chance. The crumpled note that was thrust into her hand only confirmed what she had divined: it was the note that was to have been found—afterwards!

Peggy had fought hard for that note: her every sense was trained to the signs of despondency, and she knew almost to a certainty when it had reached its last ditch. She was a fair spent little victor when she ran in to bring a cup of coffee out to Alma

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who insisted—with a bravery Peggy was far too wise not to respect—on keeping to her promise and minding the stall while Peggy ate; even though she knew, now, the loving subterfuge this plea had been.

VI

In Which the Plot Thickens

IT was nearing ten o'clock. Polly and Petie were in school and Alma was asleep in Peggy's bed where she had been persuaded to lie down and rest before going after the job Peggy was so sure was awaiting her. Peggy was sitting inside her wee shop, for purchasers who came late in the day were not in a hurry and so not averse to coming into the "imporium."

A big limousine stopped at the curb, and a young girl got out. She was a sweet, winsome-looking girl, probably twenty-one years old, and simply dressed in a dark blue serge suit and a jaunty little high-crowned hat of black beaver, untrimmed except with a stiff little grosgrain ribbon bow.

She was Anne Kimbalton, the motherless only child of Andrew Kimbalton who had married in his late forties after a long bachelorhood of devotion to business and to his widowed mother and to the collection of antiques.

The girl had been away from Chicago most

of her life: winters in kindlier climes, schools in the East, long tours in Europe. Realization of her father's loneliness and of his need of her had come to her only recently with the deepening of her nature from child to woman by the sorrow of her mother's death and the poignant hurt of a love affair whose hero had turned out to be a caddish fortune-hunter. She was trying, now, to make up for long, lost years, by entering into her father's life in the fullest possible companionship. And he, rather sorry than otherwise for his girl in view of the burden of wealth to devolve upon her, and hopeful that she might be better equipped than he for giving it away, was trying to give her what training he could in the handling of great affairs.

Many civilizations had lent their gentlest graces to the girl, but the prettiest manners she had were those that no training can give; they came from a heart sincerely without patronage. Nor would the miracle of this ever be explicable. Some people are born with that great gift. I doubt if it is ever acquired.

"Father telephoned to me," Anne Kimbalton explained to Peggy when she had told who she was, "and asked me to meet him here instead of going down to the Works. He says you've got him started on a dollar-

a-day scheme, and that I'd better ask you about it and see if I can't try it too. But, dear me! I'm too *timid* to walk up to people and hand them a dollar—for fear they say: 'How *dare* you!'"

Peggy laughed hilariously. "How funny ye are!" she cried wiping her eyes. "I kin see ye now, in me min's eye, handin' yer dollar to Mrs. Hetty Grane. On'y I kin see *her* takin' it!"

There was no superiority in her laughter; just an overflowing mirthfulness in which Anne Kimbalton could not help joining till her eyes, too, were tear-wet; for Peggy mimicked excruciatingly what she thought might be the pleased manner of Mrs. Green.

"It's a shame," she gasped, when she could command speech at all, "to make fun o' you like that—an' you wid such swate intentions. But, lan' sakes, lovey! that ain't no way to do."

"I know it isn't," Anne replied, humbly. "But how am *I* to find people who need a dollar?"

"Why d' ye begin so extravagint?" Peggy demanded. "Why don't ye start wid a pinny?"

"Oh, how would that look? And we with so much," Anne remonstrated.

"Never min'! If ye've get much money, ye ain't got much sinse—I mane of that pertic'lar kind. If I was you I wouldn't try givin' away dollars until I'd l'arned all there is to know about givin' away cints. Nobody ought to. That's the rayson so manny folks makes failures o' their philant'ropy: they begin late, an' sudden, an' they want to begin *big*. Ye can't. Now, you start wid a pinny, dear. 'Tis enough raysponsibility fer you at prisint. People that nade a pinny's more approachable—ye kin fin' out more about thim. *Then* mebbe ye kin see where ye could spind a dollar."

"Would you let me come here, sometimes, and see what you do with your pennies? I'm sure I shouldn't know how to begin."

"Sure ye kin come! Come anny time ye like."

"What's a good time to come?"

Peggy considered. "Well, avenin's is the best fer me; but afternoons is pritty good, too; an', I mus' say, mornin's ain't to be sneezed at. I guess it's like this: there ain't no time o' day er night whin ye can't fin' some wan that nades ye—if ye know where to look. But git out o' that thing," pointing to the limousine, "a block off; er ye'll niver git on at all wid yer pinny."

"I will," Anne promised, eagerly.

"My goodness!" Peggy declared, laughing. "'Tis the grand adopter I'm gittin' to be: ye're the secon' wan I've took under me wing this mornin'! Maybe I ought to tell you a little about the other wan: she was discouraged."

Peggy felt in her jacket pockets and brought out the crumpled note. "Rade that," she said.

Anne took in its brief message at a glance. "Where did you get it?" she asked, in an awed tone.

Peggy told her, speaking low, so that by no chance might Alma overhear; and Anne listened, breathlessly. She had read moving things, and cried over them—as people must when they are too remote from real life to feel its clutch upon their hearts. But this! This girl that but for sweet Peggy would now have been a bit of drift on the bleak lakeshore or in the ghastly morgue—this girl was sleeping so close that they were talking in subdued tones so as not to disturb her.

"Have ye anny idea what it manes, lovey," Peggy entreated, pleadingly, "to earn six a wake, aven? Where a girl mus' crawl to slape, and where she mus' pick up her few bites of chape food, an' what there is fer her

to do in the long avenin's whin her heart is starvin' fer a bit o' pleasure? An' then kin ye think what it mus' be whin a girl like Alma have got no job at all?"

"Oh, do you think," Anne questioned, earnestly, "that I can help her—that she'll let me?"

"I think," Peggy answered, "that ye kin help wan another a lot—if ye'll just *begin* right!"

The girls were talking when the young man came back with the answer to the note he had carried. When he saw Anne, he backed away from the door and stepped over towards Martinelli's. As he did so, two men came out of Neeley's. One was a man of stocky build, well dressed as the Madison Street clothiers dress a man. The other was an Italian, evidently a labourer; he wore brown corduroy pants, and a shabby cloth coat the collar of which was turned up about his neck. It appeared as if the Italian had been sent on some errand by the other; he started north, but paused irresolutely in front of Peggy's.

"Go on!" the other cried. "What're you waitin' fer?"

"See penny girl," the Italian muttered; but went on.

When he was gone, the man who had ordered him on spoke to the youth.

"Good-morning, Oliphant; haven't seen much of you for a day or two. Anything doing?"

Oliphant smiled. "Yes," he said; "don't laugh. I've got a job—with Kimbalton."

The man stared. "Ye're kiddin'," he declared.

"No, I'm not. But he doesn't know who I am. He gave me the job himself—here—this morning. I've just been on an errand for him—taken a note—and when I've delivered the answer, I'm to go to his Works and hand that to the head bookkeeper." He showed the scrap of paper with Kimbalton's scrawl.

The man looked at it as if fascinated. "That gives you a great chance, don't it?" he asked, eyeing Oliphant narrowly.

"I don't know; but I hope so," the boy answered. "If I can make good there, maybe he'll listen to me."

The man laughed. "And if he don't?"

"Well, I won't be any worse off; and I shall know whether he can be appealed to for a square deal."

"Hm. When you're fired, come around and see me. I think I know of something

that might interest you. Meanwhile, come in and have a drink."

"Thanks, but I'd rather not."

"A cup o' coffee, then, and a cigar? You can watch for your man from Martinelli's. That's Kimbalton's car, ain't it?"

"I don't know."

"A girl got out of it and went into Peg's. I think she is Kimbalton's daughter. Is he comin' here fer the answer to the note you took?"

"I don't know."

"I suppose it'd be *askin'* to inquire where you was sent?" The tone in which this was said was a *dare*; but Tom Oliphant didn't take it.

"I guess it's kind of confidential, or they'd have telephoned or got word some other way," he answered.

"Oh, all right."

They were in Martinelli's, now, sitting on stools well back towards the end of the counter. Suddenly, the face of Tom Oliphant's companion broke into a sardonic smile. He seemed absorbed in something he was watching in the street. Tom interestedly followed the direction of his gaze.

A heavily-built, sandy-complexioned man, who had been walking briskly south on Hal-

sted Street, stopped in front of Peggy's empty outdoor stand, then stepped to the door of the "imporium."

"See that man?" Tom's lodging-house acquaintance asked. "That's Burns, the great detective."

Tom stared in wide-eyed interest. "I wonder what he's doing here?" he said. Burns had gone into Peggy's shop.

"That's more than you'll ever know—unless he tells you. He's a deep one. And he never does any of the things anybody'd think he'd do. You know Kimbalton's got trouble at his place—steel workers and machinery erectors. Men puttin' up the new buildin' won't let the millwrights set up the machinery they made; millwrights won't let steel workers set it up—deadlock—buildin's been dynamited twice. Burns is supposed to be on the job fer Kimbalton—old man's crazy at bein' opposed—ain't used to it. Last I heard was, Burns had traced some o' the trouble to Neeley's saloon. Now here he comes trottin' down to the neighbourhood, ca'm an' casual, just where you'd think he wouldn't show himself. He's a deep guy; can't anybody ever tell what *he's* up to."

Then Tom saw his man—the one to whom he was to return the answer. He started up

hastily. "I've got to go," he said. "Excuse me, Mr. McNabb."

"I'm through," McNabb said; and went out at Tom's heels.

"All right, Oliphant," he called to Tom, when he had got outside. "I'll see you this evening."

Tom handed over his message. The man who took it looked from Tom to McNabb.

"That'll do," he said, curtly.

Tom stepped aside, and in an instant Burns came out of Peggy's, apparently absorbed in a "noon extra" he had bought.

His man approached him. Whatever their game was, it was causing profound excitement in Neeley's saloon.

"Where did Mr. Kimbalton pick up that fellow Oliphant?" he asked.

"Oliphant?"

"The fellow who carried the note for us."

"I don't know. Oliphant! That's the name of a youngster, son of a down-state bank cashier who was jailed, that's been trying to see Kimbalton to get his intercession—wrote some threatening letters, when he couldn't see him. And of course McNabb'd get friendly with a boy that had it in for Kimbalton. He'll use him, too. Better keep your eye on Oliphant."

"Yes, sir."

"Well, I guess they've all seen me—I may as well go on."

"And I'll go in here and get a cup o' coffee while I wait for Mr. Kimbalton."

When the street in front of Peggy's was clear, Tom Oliphant came back. The limousine still stood at the curb, and he was loath to go into the shop. Peggy saw him, divined his reluctance, and came to the door.

"I'm off for the job," he said, smiling.

"I told ye it was yer lucky day," she answered. "I s'pose," she went on, guilefully, "ye'll be usin' yer noon hour to write the gran' news to yer ma."

He looked embarrassed and conscience-smitten.

"I haven't been writing so very much, lately. You see, I had nothing good to tell her, so I—didn't write."

"Nothin' good to tell yer mother?" cried Peggy, in comical despair. "Don't ye love her?"

"Of course I love her!" he replied, indignantly.

"Well, then! What could ye relate that'd plaze her as much as that? What did ye think she'd be wishin' to know? The state o' the markets? My lan'! Why do God

make min widout anny sinse at all? Sure they could use a little, where they nade so much! Now you wait while I git ye a pos'-card—a nice pos'-card that the letter-carrier kin rade—an' you tell her you've got a gran' job and sind her the very most love that iver a bye sint his mother ——"

"I don't know," he objected, "whether I've got a grand job or not. I'd better wait and see."

"Wait fer nothin'!" she cried. "Tell 'er the rist of it annyway."

She hurried into the shop, made apologies to Anne, and reëmerged with her post-card. This was a favourite way for her daily penny to be invested. No one would ever know how many anxious home-folks had heard, at last, on Peggy's post-cards.

"An' ye'll sure mail it, won't ye?" she entreated, as she watched him sign it. "Sometimes I mistrust they don't. It's awful hard fer some folks to be fergiven."

"I'll put your address on it, so the answer'll come here," he said; "and then you'll *know*!"

He was adding this when Mr. Kimbalton came. Burns' man, on the lookout, came quickly from Martinelli's and spoke to Mr. Kimbalton before the magnate addressed

Peggy or Tom. Kimbalton showed, briefly, the chagrin of a man who, priding himself on his shrewd knowledge of human nature, is shown as having been badly misled.

"All right," he said. "I suppose Burns is right. We'll keep him where we can watch him. But mind you *do* it!"

"Yes, sir."

"What have you done with my little girl, Peg?"

Peggy flushed guiltily at having been caught neglecting first her business, and now her hospitality, for this young man.

"She's inside."

But Anne, hearing her father's voice, came out.

"I've had such a delightful call," she began.

"Tell me about it on the way down-town," her father said.

Tom Oliphant raised his hat deferentially.

"I'm on my way to the Works, sir," he said.

Kimbalton looked at him searchingly; and the boy, thinking he knew why, quailed.

"I'm afraid, Peggy," Kimbalton said to her when Tom had passed out of hearing, "that you made a very bad guess in that young man."

VII

In Which Petie and Polly Chiefly Figure

PERHAPS you think that was an extraordinarily eventful morning of which I've told you. (It was Thursday morning, by the way.) I don't say that every morning is quite as full of episode for Peggy. But I do say that you should not hastily discredit my account of that morning; because there is a superabundance of material for eventfulness ever at hand on Halsted Street; and "anyway besides," things are always happening in the vicinity of persons like little Peg. In part she was made by her environment, but in part, too, she recreated her surroundings; and I am inclined to believe that if Peg had lived in Cranford (supposing Peg *could* have lived in Cranford!) there would have been "drammer" in that village.

On the following (Friday) evening, Peggy was summoned from the supper table to go to the drug store; some one wanted her on the 'phone.

It was a raw evening, and as soon as the

six o'clock rush was over, Peggy had abandoned outdoor trade. When the message came, she and Polly and Petie were at the supper table, and from it one or the other of them—but usually Peggy and seldom Polly—jumped when the tinkle of the store-bell announced a customer.

I'd like you to see that room : Years ago in Chicago rank individualism reigned in the matter of street grades. You could dig your lot as deep as you liked and have your sidewalk at any level your fancy dictated. People who had a mile to go walked two—one mile up and down stairs. The basement in which Peggy lived, and had her "imporium," had originally been three feet below what is now the prescribed street level. So the front room when made into a shop was raised by the simple expedient of lifting the floor, or building a supplemental one, to the street level. This gave the "imporium" a "low-ceiled" effect ; but made it easier to heat in winter and brought the top shelves within reach even of Peg if she stood on a soap-box.

The kitchen was on the old grade—which certainly added nothing to its healthfulness, nor to its warmth in winter. Four steps led down to it from the shop. On your left as

you came down these steps was the sink, built against the partition wall ; then, a foot or so out from the left wall, Peggy's kitchen range, of goodly size and prosperous appearance—for when you live as Peggy lived, your kitchen stove is easily the most important of all your possessions. Beyond the stove was a cot bed where Petie slept at night ; daytimes, Peggy kept it covered with a dark-coloured "tapestry" spread. Over the bed was a window into an air-shaft which made a deep jog in the room. Around the corner of the jog was a door leading into that one-time pantry where now Peggy and Polly slept. Against the rear wall, a cupboard ; against the other side-wall, a bureau ; in the middle of the room, an oak extension table reduced to its minimum size. There were four oak dining chairs of the sort usually sold with such extension tables by the "easy-payment" furniture emporiums of the neighbourhood, and a rocking-chair.

I want you to do more than *see* that room. I want you to *feel* it. Perhaps I shall be able to help you do this as I go on. That is why I ask you to be patient about details.

At the moment on that Friday evening about seven o'clock when you make your first acquaintance with Peggy's kitchen and

living-room, the extension table was half set—that is, a red and white cloth was spread, doubled, over one end of it. The dishes were few, and coarse; but in the cupboard were some “best ones” which Peggy had got as premiums. She had no great amount of time for housewifeliness, but she was not without her inclinations that way.

Polly, at that moment when I ask you down the four steps from the shop-level, was making a perilous stack of the supper dishes, preparatory to carrying them to the sink. She was a bit oddly attired: hair very obviously done up to its uttermost, and adorned with an enormous new bow of black taffeta ribbon—showing the effect of persistence. Her dress-skirt looked as if it might be her “good one”; but instead of a waist she wore a sacque of red eider-down flannel, not at all clean. Polly was going to a dance at one of the near-by schools recently opened, as a Social Centre; and her toilet was in that state of semi-completeness in which supper time on Friday nights finds a majority of schoolgirls.

Petie, at that same moment, was not visible; but he was there. He had crawled under his cot, which was also his *cache*, in search of buried treasure. He came backing

out, in Polly's path, as she started sinkward with her stack of dishes, and only by a miracle escaped upsetting her—for which he was scolded sharply.

"You'll have to tell Peg I couldn't wash these—I haven't time," Polly said, when she had piled the last dish in the sink.

"Aw," Petie rejoined, "Peg ought to know you wouldn't. You never have time to do nothin' but wait on yerself."

"I'll thank you to mind yer own business," commanded Polly, scathingly.

"Ye needn't thank me," Petie retorted, "because I ain't goin' to do it."

He drew a chair up to the table and started to work. The treasures drawn from his *cache* were a handful of black curled hair which we hope was *given* Petie by some neighbourhood upholsterer or second-hand dealer, and a piece of milliner's wire. Occasionally, Petie withdrew his chewing-gum in a long string, to aid in the process of manufacture.

"Well, you can stop mindin' *mine*," Polly declared, jerking out the lowest bureau drawer and fishing from its tumbled contents a pair of party shoes with patent leather vamps and dirty white kid uppers. "I have awful little pleasure, goodness knows. And

I'm not going to be late to this dance, just for a lot of dishes."

She sat on the floor to put on her shoes. There was a hole in one stocking, far enough up so that it might show. Polly measured carefully to see if it would, and when she found it wouldn't, went on with her buttoning.

"I should think," Petie observed—unwilling to let the quarrel languish, "that you could get enough of school in the daytime, without goin' back at night."

Polly jerked out the middle drawer and brought forth a bright red cashmere waist, evidently brand new—and home-made!

"If I didn't go there, where *would* I go?" she cried, self-pityingly. "Peg would have a fit if she knew I went to a *reg'lar* dance."

"If she *knew*?" Petie echoed, quickly. "Do you ever?"

"I said she would *if* I went," Polly answered, with an air of "hedging." "Will you hook me?"

She had taken off her sacque, revealing for a moment her highly-improvised undergarments, and was now wriggling into her new waist, which fastened in the back.

Petie looked up from his mysterious occupation. "Gee!" he commented, noting the

sleeves, ending above the elbows, "didn't ye get the sleeves done?"

"That's all you get for trying to make anything stylish in *this* house," Polly retorted. "Hurry up, Petie; will you?"

Reluctantly Petie left his work and began hooking—mischievously doing it as awkwardly as he could. He pulled Polly around from the mirror she was facing, and headed her towards the opposite side of the room, pushing her steadily in that direction until he had her "bump up against" the sink. There he turned her once more, and continued his strenuous exertions, to the tune of Polly's exasperated protests.

"Stand still! Can't you?" he cried.

"How can I, when you push me?"

And so on, until it was done, and Petie had resumed his work.

"What are you doing, anyway?" Polly demanded, suspiciously.

"Nothin' you could understand," Petie answered, darkly.

Polly took an imitation Irish collar and a rhinestone brooch out of the top drawer—perhaps you are wondering where Peg kept her things; but then, Peg hadn't many to keep—and began arranging her "Dutch neck" garniture.

"More sleuthing, I suppose," she sneered.

Petie did not care to have his business inquired into; what detective would tell anything to a woman? So, to divert attention, he observed:

"It's a wonder you wouldn't look at yer-self in the back." Polly was evidently admiring what she could see in the mirror.

"What's the matter?" she demanded, craning.

"I dunno," Petie answered, "but it looks fierce."

Polly went to the sink, snatched down the small looking-glass to use for a hand-mirror, and saw that the strips of white tape, to which her hooks and eyes were riveted, showed all the way down her back: in her inexperience, she had neglected to sew her tapes to her dress along their outer edge; and, the waist being too narrow across the back, it gaped distressingly.

"Oh, fer goodness' sake!" Polly cried. "It's a wonder Peg wouldn't stay home and help me. She can't be all this time telephoning. Can't you put a pin in it, Petie?"

With an air of resignation Petie laid down his important and manly task and directed his attention to the frivolities of feminine finery. He took the pin Polly handed him.

"Put it in so it won't show," Polly directed.

"You bet!" agreed Petie, cheerfully, pointing the pin meaningfully towards her marrow.

"Oow!" Polly screamed, and made a dart for Petie, to hit him.

Petie side-stepped expertly. "Well," he said in an injured tone, "you told me to put it in so it wouldn't show."

With angry and offended air, Polly went to the window and shouted up the air-shaft:

"Al-ma!"

Alma's little bedroom was over Peggy's and Polly's, on the second floor.

Petie took advantage of her back being turned to try on the false beard he had been making. He stepped to the bureau and looked at his disguised self in the glass. The effect seemed to give him complete satisfaction. He took his cap from his pocket, replaced it with the beard, and glanced at Polly.

Alma answered down the shaft: "Whoo-hoo!"

"Can you come down a minute?" Polly called.

"Sure!"

The shop-bell rang.

"Tend the store, will you?" Polly directed Petie.

But it was Peggy, returned. Petie sidled past her, towards the door.

"Now you stop chasin' crime at nine o'clock, Petie, like a good boy," Peggy charged. "Ye have to git up so airly."

"All right," Petie promised, with a resigned air. Even Peg was deficient in understanding of his "profession."

"You were long enough!" commented Polly, as Peggy came down the steps. "Who was it?"

Peggy seemed disinclined to answer. "My! but you look nice!" she said, evasively.

"Would you put in a pin or two for me?" Polly asked. "That nasty little Petie put one right into my spine."

"Boys ain't much at pinnin'," Peggy extenuated.

When Alma came in, Polly explained:

"I wanted you to pin me, Alma; but Peggy's got here, at *last*."

"Annybody'd think I'd been gon' a wake!" said Peggy, rather crossly.

"Where were you?" Alma asked—not inquisitively, but by way of making conversation.

"To the drug store; some wan telephoned to me."

"'Some one,'" echoed Polly, pinning on her hat. "You're awful mysterious!"

"I ain't," Peggy retorted. "I don't know *who* it was."

"I bet you do, a'right," Polly said as she struggled into her coat. "But you won't tell."

Peggy ignored this.

"How d' ye like yer job?" she asked Alma.

"Oh, it's all right. But I have to stand all day, and my feet're killing me."

"Well, now," cried Peggy, sympathetically, "I know how they fale. Set down in the rockin'-chair an' rest 'em."

"I'm going," Polly announced, starting up the stairs.

"Have a good time!" Peggy called after her.

"I will!" Polly answered.

And no one could doubt that she meant to.

VIII

In Which Anne Kimbalton Begins To Get Acquainted

ALMA from her rocking-chair looked after Polly with almost hostile resentment.

"Why d' you spoil that girl so, Peggy?" she blurted out.

"Why wouldn' I?" Peggy retorted. "'Tis little enough I kin give her."

"Well, you could give her a fair chance," Alma argued, wisely; "and you're not doin' it, when you make things so easy for her. She's got to fight her way in the world—ain't she?"

"I s'pose so; but I'm hopin' her iducation'll make it aisy fer her—that she won't have to go t'rough what I did. I see so much, Alma, of girls that ain't fit to fight. You know how 'tis: they can't do nothin' in partic'lar, an' nobody'll pay 'em enough to kape alive on—an' what happens? I want Polly to stay at school till she's l'arned enough to take good care of herself. She'd l'ave to-morrow, if I didn' humour her wid bits o' hair

bows an' some money now an' then to go to shows."

Alma shook her head, unconvinced. "You got a grand idea what education'll do," she said. "I've had as much schoolin' as Polly's likely to take—an' you can see what a lot it does fer me!"

Peggy had taken off her jacket and revealed her own "dressing-up": a plaid flannel waist with a red neck-bow. She fluffed out her hair at the sides and, still standing before the mirror, experimented with a weather-beaten red millinery rose which she stuck in her hair and then hastily, and guiltily, withdrew because it was so obvious an attempt at a festive appearance.

Alma could not restrain a smile of understanding; and Peggy, seeing this reflected in the mirror, explained:

"I thought I'd fix up a bit—fer Miss Kimbalton. I ast her to come over this avenin'."

"I think she'll like it," Alma answered, undeceived. "Well, I guess I'll be goin'."

"What fer?" Peggy cried, in dismay.

"I don't think Miss Kimbalton's comin' to see me," Alma replied, evasively.

"Sure she is!" Peggy hastened to assure her. "I told her how the girls that live 'round here comes droppin' in when they've no better

place t' go, an' she said she'd love to come over an' git acquainted."

Alma's eyes flashed scorn. "Ain't you got any sense?" she sneered.

Spiritedly, Peggy confronted her. "I got more'n you have, Alma! I hope I got better sinse than to have it in fer anny wan jest because they're rich. *She* can't help what she *is*! We gotta judge her by what she *wants to be*. Lan' sakes! I bet them rich people has got their tribalations—same as the rest of us—an' why we shouldn' be kind to 'em, I niver could see!"

"I'll bet she's comin' over here promisin' herself that she'll be kind to *us*," Alma charged, bitterly.

"Well, what of it?" Peggy cried. "She don't want to be no pauper, no more'n *we* do! An' I guess we kin give her as good as we git!"

Alma laughed. "You do put things the funniest I ever heard," she declared; but even now, some of her class belligerence was gone.

"I don't see nothin' funny about it," Peggy retorted. "I'm jist plain *sorry* fer that girl."

"Well, *I* ain't!" Alma declared. Her experiences of the past weeks had not tended to deepen her sympathy for the idle, wasteful rich.

"Maybe you don't know enough about her," Peggy suggested.

"I know what I've read in the papers ——"

"Oh, I know! How she lives in five houses an' a yatch an' a private car an' a few autymobiles; an' is always chasin' from wan to another o' thim wid her tongue hangin' out—like a dog that runs under a kerridge. But that don't kape her from bein' a fine girl!"

Alma shrugged, disbelievingly. "What does she want of five houses, if she's a fine girl?"

"I don' belave she does want thim," Peggy retorted.

"Then why does she have them?"

"Say, Alma!" Peggy answered, a little impatiently; "you don't understan'. Thim people ain't hardly freer to do what they want than if they was workin' out a thirty-day fine. Now, it seems to me I niver seen annybody that naded frien'liness anny more 'n what that girl does. An' what call have *we* got to be stuck up an' snippy to her? I say she ought to have her chance to git on—same as anny other girl. If she hands us some-thin' we don' want, there ain't no law that kin make us take it! Take a chance on her, Alma. Lots o' people don't nade nothin' .

but a chance to show what real stuff's in 'em. Wait! Maybe that's her now."

The shop-bell rang, and Peggy ran up the steps. A sour-visaged woman, shawl-enveloped, was laying down a penny for an evening paper.

"D' ye rade the comics?" Peggy asked her, eagerly.

"No!"

"Would ye min' if I tore 'em off? The kids 'round here is crazy fer 'em."

The woman looked, for an instant, as if she were about to refuse. Then, trying to act more ungracious than she felt, she said: "I don't care."

"Thanks!" Peggy cried.

And just then an urchin came in—a very diminutive urchin, of the Italian persuasion, with very big, black eyes.

"Watch him," Peggy said to the woman. Then, to the youngster, "Wha'd ye want, Tony?"

Tony smiled—an irradiating smile—but said nothing.

Peggy produced the comic sheet and handed it over the counter to him; whereupon the smile that had seemed expansive enough, an instant before, became infinitely more so—until it made one marvel how so

small a thing as Tony could produce so great a smile.

That was all—no spoken word of entreaty or of thanks—and Tony was off with his treasure.

"His pa got killed on the railroad," Peggy explained to the woman; "an' his ma don't have no pinnies to spare fer comics. But if Tony have iver seen himself smile, I don't wonder he likes to practice at it—do you?"

"No," said the woman; and moved towards the door. Then she came back a step or two. "Do you know where Tony lives?" she asked.

"Sure!" cried Peggy—and told her.

"I bet she lends a hand there—poor 'n' all as she is!" Peggy commented to Alma, when the woman was gone. "People is mos'ly kind whin they know—all they nade is the chance."

"If you could buy people at what some folks think they're worth, and sell 'em for what you think they're worth, you'd sure make money!" Alma laughed. But the bitterness was gone from her manner.

Anne Kimbalton had dined early, at Hull-House; and she walked up Halsted Street to Peggy's. Andrew Kimbalton's daughter was no fool. Young as she was, she realized

something of the disadvantage of her class in trying, as so many of its members sincerely were, to make a part of their wealth serviceable to those who need it most; and she was eager to find some way to better understanding. All her life she had heard her parents' importunate mail discussed; had known something of the cases of individuals who presented themselves for succour or support or other financial favouring—and something of the sad proportion of those helped who showed a rank, incontrovertible unworthiness. She had heard talk, at her father's table and elsewhere, of other ways of benevolence: of money given to "Boards" and chiefly consumed in executive expenses; of money that endowed colleges where youngsters cheated and pranked, versus money that built libraries where he who hungered for knowledge might find it; and so on. Her father admitted that his was the gift to make, but not to disburse money; that he hoped she, who had never become, as he was, over-developed in acquisitiveness, might learn how to distribute wisely. Her training for this, so far from being hurried, could hardly be said to have begun; but the idea was always more or less kept present in her mind.

So it was in no mere giddy mood of

adventure that she was going to Peggy's. The girl was, if anything, rather too desperately in earnest. Mindful of the barriers of class-consciousness, she had worn her plainest clothes; but the result was not altogether a disguise. Her plain, boyish tailored suit was old, but the smart cut was evident. She wore what in her English school days she had learned to call a "shirt," of pleated percale, with an attached collar of Eton shape and a boyish Windsor tie. And her English hat was almost the counterpart of an Eton boy's silk hat, only it was made of black velvet. The effect was far from inconspicuous in Halsted Street—where a willow plume (had Anne possessed such a thing) would have passed unnoticed.

Peggy smothered a gasp when she saw her.

"Well!" cried Anne, when greetings had been exchanged. "I've given away my penny."

"An' the wan that got it didn' say 'How dare you?'" Peggy teased.

"No; you were right. I wish you could have seen her! She was about that high," Anne measured to indicate a child of six years or so, "and when I spied her, she had her cunning little button of a nose flattened

against the window of a shop something like yours, Peggy, only it sells candies and a few toys, too. It wasn't hard to get acquainted, and we went in and bought a doll for a penny. Before I left home, I put some scraps in my purse—thinking things might work out this way—and I sat down there in the shop and dressed that dolly. I don't believe that child had ever seen a doll dressed before!"

"Of course she hadn't!" Peggy exclaimed, delightedly. "You was openin' up a new world to her, all right."

"Well, it was nothing to the world she opened up to me! I went home with her. And—can you believe it?—that baby is the mother of a family! She is the eldest of four—pretty as picture-children, every one of them. The father has been gone fourteen months; they don't know whether he's dead or alive—and the mother works in a bakery. She goes to work at four in the morning, and leaves those babies in a dark, cold cellar. What do you suppose the midget of my acquaintance did? She was out to buy some bread, she told me, and we got it. But as we neared her house I could hardly keep up with her flying wee feet. She ran ahead of me down the narrow passageway to the rooms at the rear, and burst in with her dolly

—to give to the baby! And she was even more radiantly happy giving the doll to the year-old baby than I had been giving it to her. And think how ashamed I felt! Me giving a penny, and that darling wee creature giving her *all*!”

“I’ll bet ye gave more’n a penny,” Peggy answered, her eyes shining.

“Well, I should hope so! But I want you to tell me what you think I’d better do. That mother must be helped, so she can stay home with those babies. I wonder if it wouldn’t be a doubtful kindness for us to try to find the father?” And so on; until Anne, ashamed of monopolizing the conversation with her penny-adventure, asked Peggy:

“What did you do with your penny to-day?”

Peggy laughed, and ran up the steps into the shop; there she dipped behind a counter and brought forth a penny clay pipe and a bowl of soapsuds. She blew, with evident relish, a large bubble and tossed it towards them. The girls laughed.

“I had about siventane kids in here this afternoon; an’ whin we got t’rough I dassent give the pipe to no wan o’ them, er there’d of been a riot. So I’m kapein’ it to sind to some child that can’t go out to play.”

"I suppose there are lots of them around here?" Anne asked.

Peggy nodded—with a sigh.

"I wonder if I'll ever get acquainted like you are," Anne went on, eagerly.

"Sure you will, lovey," Peggy reassured her; "but ye've got quite a lot to contend with."

Anne read Peggy's look. "Something's wrong," she exclaimed. "What is it? Please tell me."

"Well, I dunno," Peggy answered in comical despair.

"I wore the plainest I had," Anne declared, apologetically.

"That might be," Peggy laughed, whimsically.

"Never mind; what can we do about it?" Anne demanded in a businesslike tone.

Peggy looked her over, thoughtfully. "It might be the hat," she hazarded.

Anne took her hat off. Peggy shook her head.

"No. Maybe the collar ——"

"The collar won't come off," Anne explained; "it is sewed to my shirt."

Peggy and Alma gasped.

"Sewed to yer ——" Peggy began. But Anne removed her coat and they could see

that what she called her shirt was not a nether garment. "Lan' sakes!" Peggy cried, relieved; "I thought you meant a *dickey*. Now," still studying Anne, "I've us see; none o' my things'd fit ye. But maybe Alma's got a waist from las' summer that's ironed so you could wear it. She lives right up-stairs, you know."

"Why, of course," Alma said; "if Miss Kimbalton wouldn't mind——"

"Indeed, I'd be very grateful," Anne declared.

"But say!" Peggy reminded as she went with them towards the steps, "the girls'll be droppin' in by the time you git back. If we say 'Miss Kimbalton,' I'm afraid it'll make them feel kind o'—well, you know! Until they git acquainted wid ye, they might think you was here to rubber. Would you mind if we said 'Annie'?"

"Not a bit!" answered Anne, smiling at Peggy's wisdom.

"My lan'! I hope them two gits rale well acquainted," Peggy ejaculated, wistfully, when the shop door had closed on them.

IX

In Which Tom Gets a Message

“O H, dear! Polly have gon’ an’ laid down on me again!” Peggy stood midway on the steps and, looking down into the sink, saw the dirty dishes. But she brightened after a moment of dismay, and went to work at them in a matter-of-fact sort of way as if she had not really half expected to find things otherwise. Mindful of her best waist, though, she pinned one end of a towel about her, apron-wise, using the other end to dry her dishes. She was singing at her task when she heard the shop-bell ring.

“Oh, bee-lave me if aal thim endearing young chaarrms,” she continued, stepping, dish in hand, to the foot of the stairs to see if the customer needed waiting on or could help himself. Then: “Oh!” It was Tom Oliphant who entered.

“Good-evening,” he said, coming to the top of the steps. “I don’t suppose there’s any answer to my post-card yet; but as I

was passing, I thought it wouldn't do any harm to see."

"Not a bit!" Peggy answered. "Mos' like it'll come in the mornin'. Yer ma won't make you wait so long as you made her. Come in, won't you? You kin see I'm busy."

"Can't I help?" he asked, shyly.

"Sure, there ain't enough fer two."

He sat down on the top step and watched her intently for a moment. They were both more than a bit constrained; he could account for this in himself—although with a blush—but he misinterpreted it in her.

"That wasn't the only reason I came," he said, presently—making an abrupt and awkward beginning at what he wanted to say.

"No? Did you git the job all right?"

"Yes, I got the job; but there's something queer about it. I hate to tell you—you'll think I'm ungrateful—that I love to whine. God knows I don't. But I can't help feeling that I'm being watched all the time."

Peggy coloured—remembering Mr. Kimbalton's parting words yesterday morning.

"Well," she retorted, "what d' you care if you are? They'll see all the quicker that ye're goin' to make good."

"Then you don't think it's imagination?"

"I dunno," Peggy answered, directly; "I thought yisterday that Mr. Kimbalton acted, jist before he wint away, like some wan had told him who you was. But s'posin' they did! It might make him a bit suspicious at first; but if he has you watched close enough, he'll soon l'arn the kind of a fella you are."

"It's like you to put it that way," the boy declared, gratefully. "Until I met you, the only people who took any interest in my troubles—well! you know how it is: most people feel that they've got to show their sympathy for you by making you feel as if they thought nobody ever had troubles like yours. But you—you kind of take the sting out of things, somehow. I—I guess you're about the—about the best friend I've got!"

"Oh, fer the lan' sakes!" Peggy cried, partly to turn the conversation and partly in real contrition because she had been so slow remembering; "I'm a gran' body to sind a message to! Wan o' yer friends have jist had me to the tillyphone."

"One of my friends?" in great surprise.

"Sure! They sint fer me from the drug store to take the message."

"Who did?"

"I couldn' jist git the name; but he said

it didn't matter—that you'd know. You was to go to—here: I've got the place written down," she handed a memorandum to Tom—"an' git a package—he said it was valyable."

"Are you sure," he asked, studying the address, "that it was me he meant?"

"If yer name's Tom Oliphant—which is more'n you iver told me."

"That's my name, all right. But I don't know this address. What was I to do with the package?"

"You was to kape it safe fer him till he comes back, the first of the wake."

"That must have been McNabb," the boy said, puzzled. "He told me last night he was going away for a day or two. He rooms in the place I do, and has been real kind to me in the way I told you about—helping me to feel abused. But this's sort of queer——"

"I don't see annythin' quare about it," she retorted. "That place ye're to go to is quite a ways off, an' maybe he hadn' time to go fer himself."

"But I don't see," reflectively, "how I'm to get it if I don't know who it's for."

"He said you was jest to say the package fer Mr. Oliphant."

"Well, I don't like to seem suspicious; but

—how'm I going to keep a valuable package in a lodging-house? McNabb ought to know that!"

"He did!" Peggy cried, eagerly. "He says: 'If Oliphant has no place to kape it, maybe he could l'ave it at your place?' and I says, 'Sure!' I wouldn't wonder if it's a Chris'mas present fer some wan—his girl, mos' likely."

"That's probably it," Tom agreed. "I hope he's got one—a girl, I mean. Say! I feel like a dog. I'm getting suspicious of everybody and everything. That's what being down does for you. Here! give me those dishes to put in the cupboard. That'll help me to feel like a home-folks human being again."

He took the cups and saucers from her hand, and as he did so, the shop-bell rang. Peggy ran up the steps.

Two girls had entered and were coming back towards the kitchen. One was Ida Levin, a Russian Jewess and an orphan; the other was Katie Sczymanska (pronounced Chemanska), a Polish girl. Both lived in the neighbourhood, and worked not far from there. Ida, who was eighteen, stitched belts to cheap corset covers, in an underwear factory. If she sewed belts on seven hundred

and eighty-four corset covers a day—averaging more than sixteen hundred yards of machine stitching, for she sewed both edges and finished the ends—she could earn a dollar minus the cost of all the thread she used and all the needles she broke. She would have been well content enough if this pay were to be had for sixty hours a week, fifty-two weeks a year. But it was not. She averaged about seven months of full work a year, two months of no work at all, and three months of work for two or three days a week; which brought her income down to less than four dollars a week. Ida was a clever girl, and ambitious—clever, but unskilled. She lodged with a Russian Jewish family on Jefferson Street, and paid a dollar a week for half of a three-quarter-size cot which she shared with a daughter of the house, in a room where two other daughters of the household also slept—off the family kitchen. Out of her slender remainder, Ida fed and clothed herself and was now paying for instruction in dressmaking, four nights a week in a trade school.

Katie's parents lived in the Polish quarter over the river; but Katie did not live with them. The father was a drunkard and habitual idler; the mother was a dull-witted

(practically feeble-minded) creature of unmoral rather than immoral nature. They had so badly mistreated their children that the children were taken from them by the Juvenile Court, on complaint of the Juvenile Protective Association. The younger ones were in various homes for dependent girls and boys. Katie, who was sixteen, supported herself. She was a cracker-packer, and averaged four dollars and a half a week, three dollars of which she paid for board with a family of Polish Jews on Clinton Street. Katie was "slow"; perhaps stupid. The girls she met from time to time in Peggy's, "of an avenin'," knew more or less of Katie's history and inclined to take a kind of responsible care of her, when they could.

Ida, who had eaten at Martinelli's, met Katie at Peggy's door.

"Hello, Peggy!" she greeted. "How's everything?"

Peggy glanced back, embarrassed, into the kitchen where Tom Oliphant was bestowing her dishes in the cupboard.

"Oh,—fine!" she answered. "How are you?"

"Fair. Well!" as she caught sight of Tom, "I see you got comp'ny. We're buttin' in, Katie."

"No, ye're not!" Peggy reassured them. "This is—this is a gentleman who come in to see if he could—if there was a letter fer him ——"

"I was just going," Tom declared, reaching rather wildly for his hat. "I'll be back with that package later."

X

In Which You Can Hear The Breakers

THERE was an embarrassed moment after he left. Ida felt that they had spoiled a pleasant call for Peggy, and was heartily distressed. It was Katie who restored ease.

"Say!" she sighed, ecstatically, "he's a swell fella! Where'd ye git him, Peg?"

"Oh, go on!" Peggy cried. "He's jest wan o' me customers that dropped in—like yersilves. Lan' sakes! If I iver git a fella, he'll nade to be a night watchman, that can do his courtin' in the airy afternoons."

When Anne and Alma returned, Peggy welcomed them as if they had not been there before. She was still busy with the last of her few supper dishes; and when she had introduced "Annie" as casually as she could, she went on with her work at the sink. The four other girls seated themselves according to their fancy: Ida on Petie's couch, Katie in the rocking-chair, Annie on the steps, over beside the sink, and Alma beside the table where she could rest her elbows.

It was warm and snug in the little kitchen ; it was homelike ; and the air was sweet with the sense of *haven*. A bleak wind whistled down Halsted Street and around its corners ; groggeries were crowded, and worse dens were beginning to be. Nickel theatres and Greek candy parlours tantalized the pleasure-starved. An occasional snatch of teasing rhythm came floating down from a dance hall. Hundreds were pouring into the By-Joe (Bijou) and into the Academy, to share in the splendid adventures of "Nellie, The Beautiful Cloak Model" and "Jack Binns At the Key." Hunger of many sorts stalked the brightly-lighted street: hunger for food, hunger for work, hunger for happiness, hunger for forgetfulness, and hunger to destroy. And in a dimly-lighted wee shop and a low back kitchen, a slip of a girl—a child—quite without self-consciousness in what she was doing, had created out of her material next-to-nothingness a real port for frail human craft in a storm.

"I seen yer piece in the paper this mornin', Katie," Peggy laughed.

"What piece?" Katie asked.

"Why, the wan that says ye're a dashin' brunette, an' you an' three other girls is all stuck on the same fella ; what shall ye do?"

An' Laura Jean says: 'Move where the men ain't so scarce!' Ha! Ha!"

"But I ain't a dashin' brunette," objected Katie the literal-minded.

"Ain't you? Well, that's a dashin' new red skirt ye've got on."

"Yeh," Katie agreed, showing her pleasure. "I got it off of our foreman. He's a real kind fella."

The other girls exchanged significant glances.

"Katie!" Ida cried, disgustedly. "You ought to have a nurse. You ain't fit to be goin' around alone. You got the least sense I ever saw."

"Me?" echoed Katie stupidly. "What fer?"

"What fer?" Ida mimicked the blank tone of Katie. "Don't that prove it? Don't you know you can't take a skirt off a fella without payin' fer it?"

"I don't have to pay fer it—he give it to me," Katie persisted. "My old one was wore out an' looked fierce. He ast me why didn' I buy a new one, an' I told him I didn' have no money."

"Oh, *Katie!*"

"He said it made him sore to see a nice-lookin' girl like me dressed so measly."

"Well, if you'd stop buyin' pie an' cake an' bananas an' sourkrout candy, maybe you could buy yerself a skirt. Say, Peggy, ain't it awful hot in here?"

Ida fell back faintly on the cot. Anne cried out in distress:

"Oh, Peggy! She's sick!"

Peggy went over to Ida to support her, and Alma hurried to the sink to wring a rag out in cold water.

"She needn't talk about me eatin'," Katie observed, phlegmatically. "She don't eat enough to keep alive on, since she's takin' them lessons."

Ida struggled to her feet. "It *is* hot here!" she protested. "And I been sitting right by the stove. Never mind my eatin', Katie! I rather save on my stomach than on my self-respect."

The shop-bell rang at this juncture, and Peggy hurried to attend. When she saw who it was she said:

"Why, hello, Hazel! I ain't seen you in a long time."

"I know," Hazel answered, indifferently. "Is *The Ladies' Home* out yet?"

"Not the January. Have ye had the Chris'mas wan?"

"O' course—ages ago! Anything doin'?"

She stepped back to where she could see the kitchen—and be seen from it. "Hello, girls!"

Their gasp of surprise when they saw her was not so well concealed but that Hazel was aware of it.

"My! ye look swell," Katie commented, admiringly. "Where'd you git the willow plume?"

"Bought it, of course," Hazel answered, tartly. "Where'd you suppose I got it?"

"Workin' in the same place?" Peggy asked. "I thought maybe you wint away."

"Yeh; I'm in the same place—though I think I'll change. I've had such a lot o' dates, lately, is the reason I ain't been around. The way I been goin' is somethin' awful!"

"Set down; can't you?" Peggy urged.

"No; I can't. I guess I'll take in a show. I seen a swell one last night—down-town. You certainly do see style at them theatres. Well, so long!"

"She must of got a raise," Katie observed when Hazel was gone. "Them plumes cost fourteen dollars."

"You're the limit!" Ida declared, exasperated.

"Don't you think," Anne ventured, a little timidly, "that she *might* have bought it?"

"Oh, sure!" Ida replied, sarcastically. "She earns five dollars and a half a week, sellin' gents' underwear, in the basement."

Peggy sighed sadly. "Ain't it a pity? But I was afraid Hazel'd go that way."

"Well, she's a fool!" Ida said, rising to go. "Now, Katie, you git wise to a few things; you see how it is! You take back that skirt, an' wear nothin' you can't earn and that you can't expect everybody to believe you earn. Finery you can't account fer ain't no better'n a *brand* on you—even if you got it honest, nobody's goin' to believe you did. You wear it, an' they take you for—well, you know!"

"I'll take it back," Katie promised, evidently impressed. "I didn't know it was any harm—honest I didn't!"

XI

In Which Anne Makes a Suggestion

WHEN they were gone, Anne sat looking at Peggy in a dumb wonderment: she didn't know which of a thousand questions to ask first, and she was struggling with so deep a feeling that all she could do was just look and look—finally through a blur of tears.

"Is it—is it like this—here—every evening?" she managed at last to ask. "I mean, do the girls come in, and talk this way?"

"There's always a few o' thim," Peggy answered. "Maybe you don't know it, but there ain't hardly anny other place thim girls kin go. Whether they live with their folks, or board, or lodge, there mos'ly ain't anny place to set but the kitchen—an' that's full, an' noisy. The kids makin' rough-house, maybe the baby cryin', an' maybe the pa drinkin' beer an' playin' cards wid a bunch o' min, or the ma doin' a part of her washin' an' hangin' the kitchen full o' clo'es to dry. The girls can't ask nobody to see 'em; an' if they want to see anny wan, they got to go

out. If they spind a nickel fer a show, it don't last but a little while—an' out they go. They ain't got no money fer to go to a dance—an' if they try to git took, it gits thim trouble, sometimes. There ain't no place fer a girl that can't spind, except walkin' up an' down the strate, lookin' at folks buyin' hats an' sodas an' candy an' theaytre tickets—an' that's no great fun, aven on a nice, warm night. So I make 'em welcome whin they drop in here. They kin look at Help Wanted, or rubber at the maggyzines, or set an' talk—as they fale like. It ain't much I kin do—but I do what I kin."

There was that about Peggy which made both girls instinctively forbear to retort that she did a very great deal, and that if other people came anywhere near doing as much in proportion to their abilities, the world would be an infinitely easier place for the hard-pressed to live in. Peggy's sincerity and simplicity were too great to permit of compliment. But when she said it wasn't much that she could do, Alma went to her, and took her in her arms, and kissed her—without comment—as one can kiss only a saviour; and Anne, understanding, turned hastily away and dried her tears.

"Now, Peggy," Anne said, when she could

command herself, "tell me just what you think I can do—or help to do. I *must* give Katie a new skirt. And Ida *must* let me pay for those lessons. She can call it a loan if she likes. Is there anything that can be done for Hazel?"

Peggy and Alma looked questioningly at one another, and doubtfully shook their heads.

"If they do it for feathers, there's a screw loose in 'em," Alma said. "If they're the kind that you can do anythin' with, they never give up, even fer hunger—while the lake's handy."

"Oh, Alma, darlin'!" Peggy remonstrated. "Ye're thinkin' all girls is made o' fine, strong stuff like you. They ain't, dear! Look at Katie! Katie don't mean no more harm than a kitten; but she jest ain't got good sinse. I ain't never seen no girl like Hazel that got back to workin' hard again fer small pay. But maybe it was because nobody tried long enough. I dunno. They ought to have a chance offered 'em—that's sure. But I guess there's more hope in Katie—wid *all* her soft head!—if you kin git her before she goes!"

"Tell me what I can do, and how to do it. Shall I send her a skirt, and not let her know

where it came from—just say ‘From a friend’? Or shall I ask her out to buy it? Or shall I send her the money? Or what?”

“I wouldn’t do any of them,” Alma counselled. “You see how Katie is: she’s got awful little sense, poor kid! Had it all starved and beat out of her, I guess—if she had any to start with. It ain’t goin’ to be no kindness to Katie to upset her by sudden gifts—she ain’t wise enough to spot the difference between gettin’ a thing from you an’ gettin’ it from some other person that’ll make her pay dear fer it. What that kid needs to learn is: *not* to want what she can’t earn.”

“Then how can I give her the skirt?”

“You can’t. But you can help her buy it. Loan her the money an’ let her pay it back as she can ——”

Alma stopped short, and shook her head.

“Then Katie’d borrow where she hadn’t ought to!” she said, with sudden realization.

“Or get the easy payment idea, which she don’t seem to have caught yet—lots of girls buy all they wear on the installment plan, an’ pay double fer it! I dunno—I give Katie up.”

Anne turned, distressed, to Peggy. “Do you give her up, too?” she asked.

Peggy was loath to discredit anything Alma had said; she was so eager to have Alma feel her value for helping other girls.

"Alma's right," she answered, slowly; "there ain't no doubt about it. But o' course I know what she manes: she kin see no way to 'give Katie a rid skirt, right now, widout maybe doin' her harm. That's the trouble wid so much that's give. But Alma have a wonderful idea o' what could be done fer Katie if anny wan had that much *love*. She was tellin' me about it, an' I got so excited! She knows what Katie nades; on'y it's so much to ask."

"Oh!" Anne cried; "think how much I've got!"

Peggy smiled whimsically. "Not money, dear," she said; "but love. Money, or things money'll buy, is jest what Katie mustn't get gave to her right now—it's steadyin' she nades; falein' that some wan keers tur'ble much if she kapes straight, or not. If Katie had sinse enough to think about goin' wrong, ye couldn' blame her if she thought it didn' matter to no wan what she done. If she could jest git it in her poor head that some wan cares! *That's* what Katie nades! You kin see how it steadies her aven whin Ida scolds at her; but Ida

can't mind Katie all the time—she've her own battles to fight."

Anne was thinking hard. "And I don't suppose Ida would let anybody help her!" she said.

"She would if she liked you," Alma declared. "But she'd have to feel sure about you, or she'd rather starve. She'd be awful sore if she thought she was bein' felt sorry fer."

"I see!" Anne exclaimed. "If I can make them like me, I can help them—even Hazel, maybe!—but if I can't, my money is likely to do more harm than good. Now, what shall I do? Have I a chance at all if I let them know who I am? Will they ever give me even a trial? Or will they jump to the conclusion that I'm a fool because I'm rich?"

Peggy laughed delightedly. "'Tis a pity," she said, "that folks don't mingle more—so the poor could fin' out that the rich ain't all mane an' uppish an' unheedin', an' the rich could fin' out that the poor ain't all dang'r-ous. But it'd be kind o' hard to begin, I'm thinkin'; harder for Ida, an' Katie than fer you an' your kind. But I kin see how it'll maybe be a bit hard fer you to begin; it's like you said: I'm afraid they wouldn' give you no fair chance—Ida'd turn you down, an'

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Katie'd go to pieces on you, before you could show 'em what you meant to do." Peggy shook her head. "You gotta have more'n the will to do in this world: you gotta know how."

The three girls sat and looked at one another blankly. Each was revolving in her own mind all the possibilities of the situation.

"I guess," said Peggy, softly, "the Son o' God didn' make no mistake whin He set out to help folks: He knew where to begin." The nativity in the manger was strongly in her mind because of the approach of Christmas, and the omnipresence of the theme in magazine picture and story; her shop was hung with coloured posters picturing madonnas and magi and meek cattle and wondering shepherds, and The Child: naked, out-cast, possessionless but pregnant with power to shake the world—and to save it.

"And I," Anne sighed, "am like the Rich Young Man: I don't want to sell all that I have, and give to the poor; but I'll try not to 'turn away, sorrowful.' Maybe there's a middle ground! And anyway, I want to sell most that I have and give to the poor—but I want to see how it should be done. Now, you girls tell me what you think of this: I suppose you know that my father began as

a poor boy. He came to Chicago when he was a lad of fourteen, more than fifty years ago. He lived over here on the West Side, and carried his tin dinner-pail and thought he was on the highroad to fortune when he was getting eight dollars a week—he says he has never felt as rich since. Well, he just worked and worked ; and didn't do much but work, and study how to get on faster, till his youth was gone. He was an only son, and he worshipped his widowed mother—I am afraid her husband hadn't made her very happy—and his first great dream of riches was to buy her a fine home. At last he was able to do this. In those days, the neighbourhood around Peoria and Green Streets and Washington Boulevard, and all around there, was one of the nicest in Chicago ; most of the men whose business was on the West Side had their homes there. And a little while after the Big Fire, father bought a house there : a nice, white-stone-front, three-story-and-basement house, for his mother and himself, and tried to have in it all the things his mother had dreamed about through the years when she was so poor and had to live meanly. She was a New England girl, and her ideas of home never changed much. Father says it was a time when furniture and

decoration were probably the most dreadful they have ever been. But when, instead of buying bedsteads of walnut with huge, high headboards full of machine-carved pumpkins and bananas, he went down to New England to buy his mother some old mahogany four-posters, everybody thought he was crazy. That was how he got started buying antiques—before hardly anybody else thought of it; and although he's got all of our houses full of them, and a warehouse full of others we've no place for, he can't stop buying. Well, grandmother lived in that house for twenty-five years—until she died; she loved it, and would never leave it. When father married, he went to live on the North Side—he was a very rich old bachelor, then—but his mother never would leave the home he had made for her. And since she died, fourteen years ago, he has never let it be touched—it is just as she left it. He keeps an old caretaker there, and he goes there quite often when he wants to get away from everybody and be by himself. It's—well, it isn't an intimidating house, like ours on the Lake Shore Drive. I don't really like that house, myself—it's too big and too full of servants. But do you think that if I asked Ida and Katie to come, with you and Alma, to see me at my West Side

house, they'd come—and get acquainted? You could tell them, if you wanted to, that my father buys old furniture; and as 'most everybody around there takes lodgers, they might even think that we do. Anything to get them to give me a chance to be friendly in a real way!"

"Why, I think that'd be grand!" Peggy cried, enthusiastically. "But I dunno whin I could come, very well."

"Couldn't you come for a little while to-morrow afternoon? Couldn't Polly or Petie 'tend the store for an hour or two? And don't the girls get off at four, Saturdays?"

"I kin ask thim whin they go by, in the mornin'."

"Will you? Just tell them that Annie asked you to come to see her, and to bring them."

"Sure I'll try," Peggy promised.

They discussed Anne's plan in detail, for a while, and then Anne said she must go up and change her waist and start for home.

"Say, Alma," Peggy asked her when she had said good-night, and the two girls were going towards the street door, "if you see Petie sleuthin' around, will you sind him in?"

Then, looking up at her clock and discover-

ing that it was nearly ten, she went up into the shop, opened the door, and called :

"Pee-tie !"

After listening a moment for an answering call, she returned to the kitchen and opened a *cache* of her own : in the back of the old wooden wall-clock. Pulling thence a pair of blackened steel spectacle rims, she put them on and went over to the bureau to study the effect in the glass.

"I got to rade the riot-act to that sleuth," she told herself, comically, "an' I'll nade to look as terrifyin' as I kin."

She had hardly begun to do this when Petie entered, excitedly. She stood with arms akimbo to receive him as he came down the steps.

"Is this what you call nine o'clock ?" she demanded, sternly.

Petie approached her, stepping softly. "This place is watched !" he breathed, in a hoarse whisper.

"Well, you're goin' to be watched, after this !" Peggy retorted, impatiently.

"No, honest ! I tell you—you better believe me."

"I'll belave nothin' ! You git yersilf to bed."

"Peggy, there *is* a man, across the street

in a dark doorway, and I tell you he's a detective."

"Well, you git yersilf into bed an' maybe he won't detect you."

"Aw!" With an imprecation of disgust, Petie took his beard from his pocket and started to crawl beneath his cot.

"Petie!" cried Peggy, "I said *into* bed—not *under* it!"

Petie backed out. "I was puttin' somethin' away," he explained, testily. With about four jerks he divested himself of shoes, coat and trousers, and was about to crawl beneath the covers when Peggy seized him.

"Here! D' you go to bed like a haythin, widout washin' annythin'?"

She collared him, and marched him over to the sink where Petie performed compulsory ablutions to a very limited extent, using the dish-towel.

"I don't see no use o' washin' yerself at night," he protested, yawning desperately. "Nobody kin see you when you're in bed."

"The idea!" Peggy cried. "Have you no sinse of daycincy?"

It was then that Petie noticed the spectacles.

"Where'd you git them?" he demanded.

"They're what I'm drove to by the sorrers o' bringin' up a bad boy like you," Peggy

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answered, trying to be impressively stern. There were times when Petie made her long for the size and authority of McGarigle—not that he did anything so wrong, but that she was so apprehensive of what he might fall into, on Halsted Street.

She picked up his trousers and disclosed quite shocking holes. She was attempting to fit a patch to one of these when the shop-bell rang and she put her work by, hastily—though she forgot to take off the spectacle rims.

But it wasn't Tom Oliphant who entered.

XII

In Which Tom Comes to Grief

IT was a heavily-built, sandy-complexioned man, with a chestnut coloured mustache, and the keenest eyes in the world.

"Good-avenin'," Peggy said.

"Good-evening. You're Peggy?"

"Yes, sir."

"I came to have a little talk with you."

"Well, ye're followin' the fashion of most that's come to me imporium this avenin'. But come in—maybe me talk ain't all run out."

He stepped back for her to lead the way, and as he followed her leisurely down the steps he took a quick mental snap-shot of that kitchen living-room. Seating himself, as if perfectly at home, he said, very deliberately:

"I'm Burns."

Peggy smiled. "The great detective?"

"What made you think of that?" he asked.

"It'd be a wonder," she laughed, "if I could think of annything else. We got a

sleuth in the fam'ly, and he sets you consid'r-able above George Washin'ton. When he hears you been here, an' him aslape under yer nose, I'm thinkin' he'll go out of his mind wid grief."

"Hm! And I suppose there isn't any other reason why you should be thinking about detectives?"

"Yes," Peggy answered, deliberately; "there is. There was a fri'nd o' mine in here this avenin' that told me he had a feelin' of bein' watched. An' I had rayson to think it might be so."

"I'd be careful, if I were you," Burns advised, "how I made friends with a man who thought he was being watched. A man thinks so, usually, because he knows there's a reason why he ought to be."

"Oh, there's a rayson, all right," Peggy admitted with a mournful little sigh and a shake of her head. "Not why annybody nades to watch him, but why they might think they did."

"If that's the case, watching won't hurt him."

"That's what I told him: the closer they watched, the quicker they'd find out he's on the square."

"What did he say to that?"

"He thanked me fer helpin' him to think of it that way—said most o' the people that sympathized wid him made him fale like his grievance was the worst ever instead of ——"

"Oh, he has a grievance, has he?"

"Well, I guess you'd call it that. His pa was sint to prison fer somethin' another man done."

"Almost every man who goes to prison says he goes for something another man did."

"Do they? Well, if this fella's pa did do it, I hope the boy'll niver find it out. It's bad enough to have yer pa in jail fer what you think he didn' do; but it'd be tur'ble to have him in fer what you knew he had done—wouldn' it?"

Burns looked narrowly at Peggy; he was making up his mind how clever she was, and how misleading.

"What's your friend's name?" he asked.

"Oliphant—Tom Oliphant."

"Father a bank cashier down state?"

"Yis, sir."

"Hm! I followed that case. You see, I do a lot of business in bank protection. That bank wasn't a client of mine, but I got all the data—might come in handy some time. I guess Oliphant was the goat, all right."

"Well, why didn't you say so?" Peggy cried.

"They didn't ask me."

"An' d' you have to wait fer an invitation to save an innercent man from jail?"

"You do. Just as, if you're a doctor and know what might save a sick man whom another doctor's tending, you may not interfere unless you're asked."

Peggy stared; she had never realized that there could be a so-constraining etiquette. "My lan'!" she cried. "I suppose if you seen a man drownin', before you'd jump in to grab him out you'd stan' an' ask him was annybody off huntin' him a life-preserver?"

Burns laughed. "I don't think there is any professional etiquette on drowning cases," he answered. "So your friend feels sore about his father?"

"Well, wouldn't you? But the quare thing that happened! Yiste'day mornin' whin he was jest after tellin' me about it, who should come along, an' give him a job, but Mr. Kimbalton himself?"

"Himself?" echoed Burns, as if puzzled.

"Yes. It was Mr. Kimbalton he thought could have saved his pa by speakin'—an' he wouldn'. 'Twas to see him that the young

fella come to Chicago; an' he couldn't git nare him. Then, along he comes fer his mornin' papers—an' gives me fri'nd a job."

Burns nodded. "I see. And does Mr. Kimbalton know who he is?"

"He didn't whin he give the job—but he foun' out later, I'm thinkin'."

"And Oliphant thinks it's because of his father's misfortune that he's being watched?"

"Why, what else could he think?" Peggy asked, surprised.

"Have you no idea?"

There was no doubting the implication in Burns' manner.

"Why, wha' d' you mane?" Peggy cried in alarm. "If you could see that young fella, you'd know there ain't no more harm in him than ——"

"Peggy," Burns broke in, quietly but speaking as always with that air of authority which compels fascinated attention, "I've been a detective for more than twenty years—and I've never met up with a bad man yet—I mean a man who is bad because he likes to be; what the long-haired professors call 'the criminal type'! Men commit crimes when something or other has pushed them past their limit of resistance; and the limit is near or far according to—well, about a

thousand things. Take, for example, this dynamite gang that has been giving Mr. Kimbalton so much trouble. Everybody thinks, 'What bloodthirsty desperadoes they must be!' Now the queer thing about them is that probably every one of them would faint away if they had to sit in a 'scientific' laboratory and watch some professors carving up a live dog. What is it those dynamiters do? They take an alarm clock and screw it to a board, along with a dry battery and a coil and a bit of wire, and they connect it up with a few sticks of dynamite. They put it in the basement of a building, and wind the clock, and go away. That's all. They're off in some other town, next day, when they read in the paper that the building was blown up and half a dozen men were killed—as many homes left fatherless and destitute, as well as desolate. They don't realize what they're doing—their imagination is defective—if they could foresee the suffering, they'd never have the nerve to cause it—that's why the vivisectors would paralyze them."

Peggy listened, round-eyed. The man had a narrative power, vivid, dramatic, that would have made him a caliph in times of The Arabian Nights.

Burns looked at his watch. "Am I keeping you up?" he asked.

"Oh, no! I'd be up annyway. I'm waitin' fer—fer Mr. Oliphant!"

"Late caller, isn't he?" Burns observed, as if it didn't really matter.

Peggy blushed. "It ain't jest a call," she said. "He's comin' here to l'ave some-
thin' ——"

Burns studied her face, searchingly—inquisitorially.

"To leave something?" he echoed.

"Yis, sir—a package; he's gittin' it fer a fri'nd, an' he had no place to kape it, so I told him he could l'ave it here."

Peggy was as near perplexing the celebrated detective as anybody had come in a long time. He knew she was a shrewd, worldly-wise little person, as "chain-lightning quick" as anything on the West Side. He didn't believe she could be ignorant of the nature of Tom Oliphant's errand, unsuspecting of what she was about to receive into her house; and yet——! If she were feigning innocence, she was doing it with a consummate art which upset all his theories. He had been called to the telephone about eight o'clock, and told by some one, who said he was a loyal workman at Kimbalton's, that

if Burns or one of his aides would be at Peggy's News Emporium on Halsted Street, two doors north of Neeley's, that evening after ten, the man (Oliphant) who was to "put over" the third dynamiting at Kimbalton's, on Saturday, would be found "with the goods on him." Valuable clues too often came this way for Burns to disregard one that might be such; so he sent a man over, got a report that Tom Oliphant had been there and gone, and another report that Mr. Kimbalton's daughter was in the place; whereupon, the chief went in person to the scene of so much probable action. That the Oliphant boy was being used as a tool by the suspected malcontents seemed to Burns extremely probable; but whether Peggy was their accomplice or the boy's dupe, he could not make up his mind.

He was still doubtful, when Tom came in. Burns, hearing the shop-bell ring, stepped aside so that Tom could not see him until fairly in the kitchen, but so that he could see if Peggy made any attempt to signal him.

"I hope I haven't kept you up too awfully late," Tom apologized to Peggy. "It was at the end of the world—that place. I think McNabb had his nerve with him."

He came down the steps. Under his arm

was an oblong box, wrapped in paper and tied with a stout string.

The boy looked startled when he saw Burns, and betrayed his recognition of the detective.

"You know who I am?" Burns said, stepping forward.

"I've had you pointed out to me as Burns."

"By whom?"

"By Mr. McNabb."

Burns showed surprise at Tom's ready answer.

"Friend of yours?"

"An acquaintance."

"Hm! What have we here?" touching the box.

"I don't know," Tom answered.

"Where did you get it?"

"I'm keeping it for some one ——"

"For whom?"

"I don't know—but I think it——" Tom checked himself suddenly. There was an insolent disbelief in Burns' look. The detective suspected somebody of something. Tom would be careful how he incriminated McNabb on a supposition. Once these detectives got an idea in their minds, it was hard to dislodge; and not every innocent man can prove his innocence!

"You think what?"

"I don't know," Tom answered, with his first show of sullenness.

Burns took the box, broke the string with a quick wrench, lifted the cover, and took out—an alarm clock, a dry battery, a coil, and a half dozen sticks of dynamite.

Peggy gave a little, stifled cry of horror. Tom stared at the stuff uncomprehendingly.

"You don't know what these are for, I suppose?" Burns asked, with a sneer.

"No, I don't! Of course you don't believe me! How could I expect any one to believe that I don't know what I went for, or who sent me? I'm in for it—that's all!"

"It's the truth he's tellin' you!" Peggy cried, catching Burns by the arm imploringly. "It was me got him to do it—tellin' him mos' like it was a Chris'mas present. He *didn'* know——"

"*You* didn't know," Burns corrected, pushing her gently away.

"It's no use, Peggy!" Tom cried, savagely. "They've got me—it's a frame-up. I haven't done anything—but I wish to God I had! I wish I'd given you," to Burns, "a run for your money! Good-bye, Peggy—and thank you."

"Thank me?" sobbed Peggy. "You ought to curse the day you seen me!"

As Burns and Tom went out, they passed Polly coming in.

"What did he get pinched for?" she asked, curiously.

Peggy did not answer.

Polly went into the little bedroom and lit the gas.

Still Peggy stood at the foot of the steps and looked towards the street door.

"I knew you'd get in wrong some time—makin' friends with all the queers that come along," Polly called from within.

Peggy went wearily up into the shop, locked the door, and turned out the light. Then she came back into the kitchen, turned out the light there, and dragged herself drooping across the dark room towards the bedroom door.

The instant she had got inside, Petie raised his head to reconnoitre; then grabbed his clothes and shoes. Scrambling into them as he went, and trembling with excitement, he crept stealthily up into the shop, opened the door gently, and disappeared into Halsted Street.

XIII

In Which Tom Is Enwrapped In Luxury

"**Y**OU understand, Oliphant," Burns said when he and Tom left Peggy's, "that you are not under arrest. I will, of course, have you arrested at any moment that you demand it. But if you are willing to consider yourself my—well, my guest—for a while—perhaps only for to-night—I'd greatly prefer it. What do you say?"

"I wish I knew what Spanish Inquisition business you are up to!" Tom cried, hotly. "But I don't see what I can do about it! I'm up against it, whatever way I turn. Go ahead. Do what you like. You've got my finish framed, and I can't see what difference it makes to me how I get it."

"You're talking wild, Oliphant," the detective said, quietly. "This is a country where every man is innocent, in the eyes of the law, until he's proved guilty. I have no reason to believe that ever, in my whole career as a detective, I have prosecuted, let alone got conviction for, an innocent person."

I hope I am not going to begin that kind of sorry business now."

"That's a grand thing to tell me!" Tom retorted, savagely. "Look at my dad!"

"Did I prosecute your dad, or have anything to do with his conviction?"

"No; but your boss did!"

"I have no boss."

"Well, this man Kimbalton that you're working for now."

They walked along in silence for a few moments. It was a snowy night, and a sharp north wind was blowing in their faces. Burns made no effort to restrain Tom or to prevent his escape. But even Tom, unused as he was to police methods, knew how futile it would be to try to elude this man. Burns might let him do it; but in five minutes there would be a police drag-net out that he could not hope to evade. So, although he could not guess whither he might be going, Tom went unresistingly.

As if he had not heard Tom's last remark, Burns said, presently:

"Where d'you live?"

"Antlers Hotel, on Madison."

"Any reason why you'd like to stop there on our way?"

"No."

"All right."

They turned west at Monroe Street. It was a little easier to talk, here.

"Boy," began Burns, "I'm going to tell you something: I never saw Kimbalton until a week ago—after the second dynamiting at his place. But I know a good deal about that case in which your father was sent up; and if my long experience in bank protection serves me right, your father was only a fool—not a knave. But I don't believe Kimbalton knew any of the facts; all he knew, or knows, is what the president told him. He *knows* the president—probably likes him, personally; he doesn't know your dad—and there you are! That's human nature, boy: if somebody is a rascal, it *can't* be that pleasant person you know—it *must* be that other whom you haven't seen. Kimbalton's a shrewd man—about some things!—*very*; but nobody's shrewd about everything. He was the heaviest creditor of that bank in the corn belt; somebody had been peculating and speculating—ain't it funny more people don't see how near alike those words are?—and something had to go through. If Kimbalton had known your dad and not the other fellow, he'd have fought the other way. I'd like to take the matter up with him, and tell

him what I think. But you've kind of closed the door on that, I guess. I don't mind telling you, boy, I'm *sorry* you let McNabb make a tool of you. What's the matter? Does it run in your family to be dupes?"

By all the laws of Burns' experience this should have made the boy very angry; made him cry out that he was no dupe—and then go on, in his passionate desire to establish his intelligence, to incriminate himself, and others. Instead, he made no reply; but seemed lost in his own bitter reflections.

Presently they made another turn, and in a few moments stopped at an old dwelling; it was a detached house, of brick, with a white-stone front, and even in the blustering night showed sharp differences from its neighbours. They evinced their fallen estate: their wooden steps sagged; their front doors bespoke hard usage; their sidewalks and infinitesimal bits of front yard—handkerchief size—had a long-unshovelled look; their windows were either rakish or sullen, like the two types of hard, ungenteel poverty they housed. This place to whose door they mounted was scrupulously kept as if the New England housewifely spirit of Lucy Kimbalton still directed its maintenance.

Burns rang. An elderly woman came to

the door. Burns nodded to her. It was as if she expected him.

"This is the young man Mr. Kimbalton 'phoned you would stay here to-night," he said. "Make him as comfortable as you can."

"Yes, sir."

"Good-night, Oliphant. Ask for anything you want. I'll see you to-morrow."

"Would you care to go right to your room, sir?" the caretaker asked Tom, when the door had closed on Burns' retreating figure.

"If you please."

She led the way up the stairs. The house was lighted with gas, and there was a newell post at the foot of the stairs, as well as a sort of hanging lantern on a level with the transom of the front door and illumining the house number thereon; both were of white ground glass, etched, and had dangling prisms of dazzling cleanness. The door into the front parlour stood open, and Tom got a glimpse, as he mounted, of a delightfully quaint room. There was only one gas-jet burning in the chandelier with its tall crystal globes shaped like old candle-protectors, and he had but a glance within; but that glance revealed an antiquated landscape wall-paper,

in tones of soft grays and whites, and a general impression of good old mahogany.

Certainly there could hardly have been a strange house which conveyed less suggestion of sinister intent. The guest room to which Tom was shown was the large front room on the top floor—the second above the parlour—and there was a glowing hard-coal fire in the small iron grate beneath the white marble mantel; this, the housekeeper explained, because the furnace heat did not always “come up good.” There was a huge four-poster bed, with a tasselled dimity tester and a valance, and a crocheted counterpane with knotted fringe. Tom had never been in a room so full of charm. Candles burned in the tall glass protectors on the mantel-shelf. There was a chintz-covered easy chair before the fire. The walls had a paper of impalpable shades, that gave the effect of plummy branches waving in a mild breeze. There was a pitcher of water and a night candle, with matches, by his bedside. On the washstand was every requisite for the toilet; and lying across the bottom of the bed, whose covers were turned back ready for him to get in, was a nightshirt.

To a homesick boy fresh from The Antlers, with its single rooms at twenty-five cents a

night, this place would have been all but unnerving in any event. As it was, he could only with difficulty keep up a show of composure in the presence of the elderly woman who was so eager to make him comfortable.

When he had sufficiently assured her that he wanted nothing, she withdrew. Tom sat down to think. This was the twentieth century; it was not possible, he tried to convince himself, that men, even with so great power as Andrew Kimbalton's wealth gave him, should seize and shut up, without accounting to any one, a poor wretch who had displeased them. Those times were in the darker ages. He must be calm. At least there was *one* stout-hearted little creature who knew that Burns had taken her new friend and would not easily be denied an accounting for him. So this was Kimbalton's house, was it? What was his need of such a place? Tom looked about him with a grim amusement that his apprehension could not quench. He had been as ardent a reader as most boys of the historical romances that abound in dungeons and moats and keeps and warders, and seneschals, and trembling prisoners who were dispatched as their captor ordered, and none that loved them ever knew in what dark, rat-infested hole their bones mildewed. Was it

possible that twentieth century robber-barons had their condemned put to death in mahogany four-posters?

Thus and thus Tom tried to laugh away his fears. Presently he got up, tiptoed across the room, and noiselessly opened the door. There was not a sound in the house. Should he try to escape? What would be the use? Burns could get him back, no matter where he got to. Still, just to satisfy himself what was the intent towards him, he thought he would go down through those pleasantly-lighted halls, and see if any one would stop him. They would hardly shoot. Tom had sturdy sense enough to know that Kimbalton's minions would not do that, save in self-defense. He went down, boldly—though his heart was beating wildly; no one impeded him. He opened the front door; no one seemed to care. Then the folly of running away came to him: it would be like a confession of guilt. He crept up the stairs again, and into his room, and went to bed. The morrow must bring what it would.

And Burns' man, on guard in the silent house, listened and smiled. His instructions were, if Tom went out to shadow him and see whom he warned.

In the morning, Tom was served with

grape-fruit and oatmeal and bacon and eggs, toast and coffee, at Lucy Kimbalton's dull-finished mahogany table set with white doilies and blue-and-white china. After breakfast, he sat by an open fire in the back parlour, and read the morning papers. There was a telephone on the wall—one of the earliest installed in Chicago homes—and he wished, as he looked at it, that he knew how to send Peggy word he was safe—so far. But he could think of no one to call except Neeley's; and he wouldn't ask her to go in there. As the morning wore on and no one came, he buried himself in "A Tale of Two Cities."

XIV

In Which Tom Makes a Sudden Decision

IT was two-thirty on Saturday afternoon before Burns came back—smiling. Somehow, a report had got out that Burns had “nabbed” the Kimbalton dynamiter. It might have come from Peggy, or her household: if they had told the policeman on their beat, it would not have taken long for word to reach Desplaines Street station and the hungry police reporters. At any rate, Burns’ office was in a state of siege by young men—not with note-books; oh, dear, no! fancy a reporter deigning to take notes! but with news-sense as keen as hounds’ scent, and minds full of impressionistic phrases with which, after all, facts would have very little relation. And Kimbalton’s down-town and West Side offices were in the same state of siege. Even his house, where the veriest “cub” knew better than to look for Andrew Kimbalton after 6:30 A. M., till towards evening, was lightly bombarded; but the English butler, at the door and ’phone, gave the impression that dynamiters could hardly

be expected to interest that august household; certainly, if any had been caught, no one in milord's castle had condescended to mention the fact—or words to that effect.

Burns had laughed good-humouredly at the besieging squad.

"What did the report say I did with him?" he teased. "Tried, convicted, executed and buried him myself, in the dead o' night? Boys! boys! what's come over you? If I had a dynamiter, where would I be keeping him?"

"That's what we want to know!" they cried.

Whereupon Burns laughed more merrily even than before. "Why," he said, as he was retiring to his private office, "you surprise me. Go back and talk to your law departments—or read history. The Bastille fell a hundred and some years ago. If we arrest and confine men now, it is on warrant, and a matter of public record; there are no secret dungeons for offenders against the great. Boys! boys!"

This was true; but not one of the "boys" believed it was the whole truth. They took themselves off, and each one strove to make the others think he believed Burns and had dropped the story; then tried to elude the

others and do a little Sherlocking. It would be something in a fellow's cap to outwit Burns and "scoop" the dynamite story for his paper; yes, and something in all his weekly envelopes thereafter!

And Burns, who knew exactly what the boys meant to do, was smiling because he had been what he called "a little careful" in coming here, and he couldn't help feeling mildly amused at the whole situation.

The amusement did not lessen when he discovered Tom basking before an open fire and vicariously suffering the terrors of the French Revolution.

"Well," he asked, as Tom closed the book, "how goes it?"

"I have been physically comfortable," the boy answered, curtly. "But if you have come to consult me, I prefer jail. There, I know what I'm up against; here, I don't."

Burns shrugged. "As you like," he said, indifferently—and passed on through the room and down the basement stairs to the kitchen, to speak to the caretaker, and to the man who had been on guard.

From the front basement Burns hailed Kimbalton when he saw the latter approaching, and led the way to the rear. Andrew Kimbalton was no stranger to that back

kitchen with its big range recessed beneath a brick chimney-place; its braided rugs; its dresser full of blue and white, of pewter, and of copper lustre; its plants in the west window; and its sink above which the shining tin dipper hung. At any of his homes, the kitchen was strange territory, tyrannized over by his foreign chef. But when he came to this house, Kimbalton seldom failed to visit the kitchen, and to drink from the tin dipper: a homely pastime elsewhere denied him.

There he and Burns conferred—while Tom sat up-stairs, and wondered what was going to happen to him. And as he wondered, suddenly there came to him one of those inexplicable swift changes of purpose which come, at times, to us all: he had given up without a fight; he had not made even a show of resistance to tyranny. The man who had jailed his father was now going to jail him—likewise without cause. Could worse have befallen father and son at the hands of one overlord in those times the French Revolution rose to put an end to? Of what stuff was he made that he should bow his head unresistingly to the power of money and say that he was impotent against it? The rage in him that had been sullen leaped, now, in sudden flame. He stepped

out into the front hall. The caretaker had brought down from his room and hung on the hall-tree his hat and coat. The very act was a taunt; as if they knew he dared not leave. He seized them, opened the door, and—was away, his back turned upon The Antlers and on Halsted Street, when Burns came up-stairs to tell him that he apologized for detaining him, hoped he had not suffered any great inconvenience, and begged that he would consider his movements unrestricted.

"It's a bit queer," Burns observed to Kimbalton; "for when I went down-stairs, he was sullen, but passive—as if he had figured it all out and assured himself how little good it would do him to run. I didn't say anything to him—didn't want to until I had seen how you felt about letting him go. I can't quite get his sudden shift; and I'm not as sure about him as I felt five minutes ago. This is a sharp game we're up against, Kimbalton. Those fellows are not bunglers—they know something of strategy. They insist that this is war—openly declared, and to be fought to a finish. Well! the finish is not in sight yet. I'll get that boy back. And next time we'll hold on to him."

Before Tom had gone a mile, the drag-net was out for him.

XV

In Which Anne Kimbalton Wins a Point

KIMBALTON and Burns were still in conference in the library when the front door-bell rang, and the caretaker asked what she should do.

"Open ; but don't let any one in," Kimbalton gave order ; and he and Burns hushed their conversation so they could hear what was said at the door.

"Why, it's Anne !" her father exclaimed, jumping to his feet. "My dear girl, what brings you here ?"

"I—why, I have an appointment here," she answered. "I haven't seen you since I made it. I never dreamed it might be intruding on you."

"Of course not, dear. But it just happens that I—and I—isn't it a bit extraordinary for you to have appointments here ?"

She laughed. "It's like a French farce—only perfectly respectable ! I discover you in a business conference. You surprise me in an adventure in philanthropy."

She described to him the occasion for her coming. He was skeptical about the possible results.

"Look at the money I've spent in what they call Welfare Work. And who thanked me for it? You say those girls have no place to go, evenings. What's the matter with those great recreation rooms fitted up at such expense—gymnasium, and everything?"

"These girls don't work for you."

"But the girls who do work for me—hundreds of 'em—don't go there, either. Pale-faced fellows, with what that newspaper critic calls 'lyric hair,' come around and tell me that I ought to be ashamed because the girls I pay wages to dance in saloon halls. So I build them a big hall to dance in—fit it up in great style—and do they come to it? They do *not*! I think it's bully of you to think this pretty little scheme out, and try to help. And of course, you can go ahead with it if you like. But I'm afraid you're going to be a disappointed young Samaritan. Give 'em your penny a day, or your dollar, and let 'em spend it. But don't try to uplift them—because I can tell you, after an expensive experience, they don't want to be uplifted."

Anne's eyes twinkled with merriment. "The sodden wretches!" she cried. "They shall perish in their mire of unenlightenment. I'll send them away, when they come. And then, will you do something for me?"

"Why, of course—if I can," he agreed; but he was rather puzzled, because usually Anne had more of his pertinacity.

"There's a performance of 'Die Götterdämmerung' at the Opera, to-night," she said. "It's not our night; but I want to go. Won't you take me?"

He stared. "You know I hate opera," he reminded her; "makes me go to sleep. And that one of all others! lasts all night, and not a tune in it. Anne, dear——!"

She looked shocked. "Oh, dad! Why, music-lovers are transported by it."

"Humph!"

"And I've invited such an interesting man to luncheon to-morrow. He has promised to talk to us about the Niebelungen trilogy. What will he think, when he learns that you wouldn't even go to-night?"

Kimbalton's expression of despair would have wrought sympathy in any one but his daughter.

"I can't help it, Anne!" he cried. "But that stuff just doesn't get me. When I go

after a good time, I want to *laugh*. Harry Lauder for me, and dog take Wagner!"

She was struggling with the twitching corners of her mouth. "Isn't there *any one* I can uplift?" she wailed, disconsolately.

He looked his reproach full at her for a second; then pounced, as if she were a little girl and he would catch and soundly spank her.

"Oh, all right!" he cried. "My hands are up, my weapons down. Go ahead with your elevating—only don't take advantage of a defenseless fellow that has surrendered. Elevate what you can find to struggle with—but please spare father!"

And, grinning with delight at her victory, he withdrew to the library and closed behind him the folding doors.

XVI

In Which Anne Makes a Frank Declaration

IT was Anne herself who opened the door when the girls rang. She was dismayed not to see Peggy.

"At the las' minute she couldn' get away," Alma explained. "Neither o' them kids was there to tend the store. I wanted her to let me stay, but she wouldn't. She said she'd be along pretty soon; that Polly had promised to get back by four, but she must have forgot to keep watch of the time."

She could not tell Anne, then, how at the last minute Ida had wanted to back out, and it had needed all Peggy's diplomacy to get her to come. Katie was naturally acquiescent, just as Ida was naturally suspicious and difficult.

Ida was not favourably impressed with these surroundings; Alma could see that, and could sympathize with it. She herself would have been chilled and put on the defensive by them had she not been so completely won to Anne, so convinced of her sweet sincerity, and so eager to help her.

Peggy had told the girls that morning, as they passed on their way to work, that Annie wanted to ask their advice; that she was getting up something, and wanted their help. Annie's address was reasonably reassuring to Ida, but the air of the house was not: the bitterly proud Russian girl scented benevolence, and was ready to decline it resentfully, even with wrath.

Anne could feel this defiance, and at first it discouraged her; then it put her on her mettle.

"I had such a good time at Peggy's, last night," she said, by way of explaining her invitation, "that I thought it would be nice if we had a little club or something—so we could meet regular, and get up things, and all that. Sometimes we could go to Peggy's, and sometimes we could come here. What do you think?"

"It costs money to do things," Ida hastened to answer; "and we can't pay for fun. And it takes time. I know I ain't got time to belong to no club. Katie kin speak for herself—an' Alma."

"Would it be a pleasure club?" Katie asked, her slow suspicions aroused by fear of something educational.

Anne smiled as she remembered her father. "Oh, of course," she said.

"I'm obliged," Ida broke in, abruptly; "but I ain't got time fer pleasure."

"Well," Anne interposed, "maybe your pleasure and Katie's wouldn't be just the same. You like to sit around and talk—don't you? That doesn't cost anything; but it's nice to have some place you can go and meet people you like—isn't it?"

"When I want to do that, I can go to Peggy's. What do I need of another place? Of a club?"

"I—I don't know," Anne faltered; "that's what I wanted to ask you."

Alma yearned to step into the breach, but didn't know just how and was afraid to venture lest she make it wider.

Ida rose from her seat on Lucy Kimbalton's haircloth-covered sofa with the lovely lines.

"Excuse me," she said; "I don't know who you are, ner what you're after. But there's something queer about this, and it don't strike me right. You're not our sort, and you can't understand us. Peggy ought to of known that. I guess you mean all right; an' maybe Katie, here, might be interested in your scheme. But I—— Well, if I get out, perhaps you'll get on better."

She made a move towards the door, but

Anne laid a pleading hand on her, restrainingly.

"Wait!" she begged. "You're right! There *is* something queer about this, and it won't do. I tried it because I thought maybe I could make you like me, and trust me, if we could get acquainted this way. We can't—I see. I'm Anne Kimbalton"—Katie gasped, but Ida was less surprised; she had not suspected just this, but was prepared for it in kind if not in degree—"and I—— What can I say? I feel as if I ought to apologize for myself, and yet as if, if I were in your place and you were in mine, I'd feel that no apology could be made. I have been very—not deceitful, but not ——"

"On the level," Alma suggested, as Anne hesitated for a word.

"Yes—that's it: not on the level. Now let me be plain and frank. You girls work hard, and you don't get half enough for it—you go without the necessities of life. I don't work at all, and I have everything. I don't blame you if you hate me; if our places were changed, I'm sure I should hate you. But if I could only learn how, I'd love to do something to make things if not right, at least more nearly so than they are now. I'm in earnest, with all my heart. But what."

can I do? If you were in my place, Ida, and I were in yours, what would *you* do?"

"Raise wages," Ida replied, briefly; but she was perceptibly softened.

"I can't raise your wages," Anne retorted, "because I don't pay them."

"No; but you, or yer father, pay hundreds o' girls. Do they all get all they earn? Or could they be helped so they could earn more?"

"I—don't know," Anne faltered.

"That's the place fer you to begin," Ida reminded.

"I'll try," Anne promised. "But of course it is father's business—his and the other stockholders'—and I don't know how much I can do. If it were all his, you see, it might be different. He has more money than he wants now; he could well afford to earn far less. But there are others interested—and they are not satisfied! Why, even Peggy told me that Polly never gets through counting up what she could have if Peggy didn't give away nearly four dollars a year! There isn't one of us who can go very far without consulting others. What I *can* do is to use my own allowance. And that's what I'm trying to find out how to do so it will really help. But—you see how it is! There are a good

many girls who feel as I do, and there are so many girls who feel as you do. I don't *blame* you—I'd do just the same—but there we are! If you won't let me do anything for you, won't you be my friend and help me do for others?"

She held out her hand, appealingly, and Ida grasped it. "I'm with you on that," she agreed.

Alma smiled. She knew that Peggy had passed Anne on to her as one that might be helped; and she had chosen, rather, to join the helpers and make Ida the beneficiary. Now, here was Ida on their side—and they were *all* looking for some one to be kind to! If Katie were not careful, she would be borne down by kindnesses because she was the only willing recipient.

Anne, encouraged, launched into explanations—and in the midst of them, the door-bell rang.

"It's Peggy," Alma said.

And it was—a breathless Peggy.

XVII

In Which Peggy Gets Into Further Complications With Dynamite

"**L**AN' sakes!" she cried, when Anne admitted her. "Who is yer dago fri'nd, an' what has he got agin yer havin' visitors?"

"'Dago'?" Anne echoed, blankly.

"Yes—out in front. He was down in the area way whin he seen me, an' he come runnin' out. 'Where you go?' he says. I didn' *think* it was anny o' his business—but then again, it might be—so I told him. 'No!' he says. 'No!' an' grabbed holt of me. That made me mad. 'I was ast here,' I says, 'an' I'll have no janitor kapein' me out because I didn' come in me autymobile.' So I put down me head an' charged like a goat—you don't sell papers on Halsted twelve years an' I'arn nothin'—an' here I am."

Anne's face had blanched almost at Peggy's first mention of a "dago." She knew a good deal about her father's difficulties; about why he was at that moment conferring with Burns. And she knew that no Italian could have a

reason for stopping Peggy except it were a reason that demanded inquiry.

Without waiting even for Peggy to finish her amused account of how she came to the party, Anne flung open the folding doors, and, trying to speak steadily but to lose no time, said:

"Mr. Burns, there is a suspicious Italian out in front. He tried to stop Peggy."

Both men jumped to their feet. Their minds were full of dynamite terrors, and Anne's tone was very tense. Even although it had never occurred to them that there could be danger here, or that their disturbers were aware there was such a place as this, still——! All this in a flash of two quick minds. And then—in another flash, almost quicker than lightning, another common thought: Tom!

"Don't move till I tell you!"

Burns went down the basement stairs at what seemed like a flying leap; wrenched open the front basement door; thrust his hand into a heap of rubbish which his very slight acquaintance with the caretaker's methods made instantly suspicious; and drew out a gas-pipe bomb attached to a ten-minute fuse—which was not lighted.

The speed at which such a brain works in .

such a moment is incomparable; nothing in all the marvels of nature or science is a parallel.

Burns made calculations on the likelihood of there being other bombs in other places, with fuses burning; he made calculations on taking time to alarm the household and tell them to give like alarm to those in neighbouring houses, and in a flash like that of a high-speed camera shutter, he had decided everything. If the man was there when Peggy came in a minute ago, it was because he had not lighted his fuse—once that is done, they never tarry. And even if he had sneaked in somewhere and lighted one since trying to stop her, there would be some minutes yet before it could burn to the cap; because the dynamiters seldom leave themselves less than ten minutes for their getaway. Lives were safe for long enough to permit of his trying to find the Italian.

All this he formulated without a pause in his catapult motion. Also, that the man he sought would almost certainly not stay in sight, if waiting. He had tried to save Peggy—he knew Tom well enough for that! The fellow would hide until he saw Peggy come out. So Burns turned sharply, and was back up-stairs again almost before the

astonished group had grasped the paralyzing situation.

"Go out, Peggy!" he ordered. "Stand on the steps—look about you—see if you can't get him out of hiding to speak to you again. Then hold him—somehow—till I get him. The rest of you can go out the back way if you are nervous—but I don't think there's any danger—yet."

Even as he spoke, he was urging Peggy towards the front door.

"It's up to you," he said, briefly. "Get that dago."

She opened the front door and went slowly down the steps; then paused irresolutely at their foot. Her man was not in sight. She started south, as if going home, and trotted briskly for a hundred and fifty feet or more. When she wheeled, sharply, she saw him.

Little Peg had her own pretty arts of strategy—like those she had used to keep Alma from her desperate purpose—but they were in nowise adequate to an occasion like this. She had not the faintest idea how to calculate the probable movements of a dynamiter—what he might do to her or, if she made a false move, to others. All she could comprehend was that Burns had said it was "up to" her to "get that dago." She

walked back, thinking hard, trying to decide what she ought to do. She looked as if she had forgotten something and was returning for it. The Italian saw her and drew back. Peggy's face was a picture of despair. But she had perfectly fulfilled her mission: Burns, watching, saw an Italian—in that neighbourhood a familiar type—and by the expression on Peggy's face knew him for *the* Italian. In a moment he was out and had him.

"Come in, Peggy," he said. "We want you."

XVIII

*In Which Lucy Kimbalton's Quaint Parlour
is the Background for a Strange Scene*

ANNE had told Alma, quietly so as to avert any feeling of panic, but decisively, that she thought it would be better for the girls to go ; and she directed them how to leave : by the kitchen and back through the yard to the alley gate. When Burns entered with his captive and Peggy, only the Kimbaltons were there, in Lucy Kimbalton's quaint parlour.

At sight of the Italian, Kimbalton's rage flamed into red fury ; he had difficulty to keep from seizing this creature and shaking him into insensibility. The outrages at the works had roused his fighting spirit and made him obdurate ; but this ! this dastardly attempt to wreak vengeance not on him alone but on innocent noncombatants, here in his mother's home, made sacred by the things she had loved ! How dared they call this war ? (This being the only war he had ever fought in, Kimbalton might, perhaps, be pardoned for supposing that any war's worst

cruelties are inflicted on the field of battle ; that in *any* war the defenseless and noncombatant are inviolate, immune.)

Kimbalton was flame-hot. Burns was cold as chilled steel. Because excitement made him cool, not hot, he was what he was. Anne shared her father's anger, though in less degree. Little Peggy was bewildered. She looked from Kimbalton in his rage to Burns in his cool triumph, and then to the trembling creature who had been about to do so foul a deed. That she herself was on the rack as well as he did not—of course—occur to her.

"Peggy," Burns asked, "did you ever see this man before?"

"Not that I raymimber," she answered, shaking her head ; but her tone was doubtful, not positive.

"Think hard !"

"Sure, I am ; but I can't say. I might of seen him—Halsted Strate is quite a place fer seein' folks—but I don't know who he is er annythin' about him—if that's what you mane."

"You don't know why he tried to stop you from coming in here?"

"No."

"Well, I'll tell you ! I suppose you don't

know, either, who sent him here to blow this place up?"

"No. How should I know?"

"That's what I'd like to find out. What have you got in your hand?"

Peggy looked down at it as if, in the excitement, she had forgotten what she *did* have in her hand. Then she held it out.

"I'm glad you ast me," she said. "It come fer him this mornin'—it's from his ma, I guess—an' I brought it along thinkin' mebbe Miss Kimbalton could git it to him."

Burns took the letter and studied it for a second. "Then you *haven't* seen him!" he remarked, as if to himself.

Peggy stared. "Seen him? How would I see him? I dunno where he is. I looked in all the papers, an' niver a word did I see o' where you took him to. The avenin' papers says there was a rumour that you had a—dynamiter; but that no such arrest had been made. You can't belave a word thim papers says."

"Once in a great while you can—and this is that one time. I don't know where your friend is, any more than you do—but I *hope* to know, any minute."

"Did he give you the slip?" Peggy cried, incredulously

"He did. He's a deep one—that boy! I thought I had his number—and then, I knew I didn't! But I've got it now—and when I get *him*——!"

Burns' look made Peggy quail for Tom.

"What are you going to do with—that rascal?" Kimbalton broke in impatiently, indicating with a glaring look their present captive.

Burns regarded the Italian briefly and with utter contempt. "Keep him where he is until we get the boy," he answered. "This creature doesn't know anything—that's why he's here."

"He knows that it's a crime to blow up property and destroy lives!" Kimbalton thundered.

Burns shrugged. "In a way he does—yes; but not as you and I know it, and not as the fellows know it who sent him here. Now, Peggy, you listen to me: You know whose house this is?"

"Why, yes; Miss Anne told me."

"When?"

"Last avenin'."

"Had you ever heard, before, that Mr. Kimbalton owns such a place?"

"Niver."

"Very well. Now, when I took your friend last night, I had no idea he was any-

thing more than a dupe; but I wanted to be sure who he was working for. So I brought him here—not under arrest, but as Mr. Kimbalton's—well, *guest* for the night. I gave him the run of the house, and told him he was not under detention—could go if he wished. Then I left—but I had him watched. I wanted to see who he'd try to communicate with. He didn't try. From the way he acted, or didn't act, and things I found out this morning, I was pretty well convinced, an hour ago, that the boy *didn't* know what was in that package. I told Mr. Kimbalton, and he agreed to let the boy go—only, we'd have him watched for a while. I came up here to tell him we would not ask him to stay longer—he was gone! That was less than an hour ago. Do you—begin to see anything?"

Peggy was staring at him with a troubled, startled gaze.

"I—don't know," she faltered.

"Well, I'll help you: your friend knew about this place—knew I was here—may have surmised, or known, Mr. Kimbalton was here. Suddenly, on finding that out, he goes. In just about the time it would take him to get busy, this dago appears with a bomb. *Now*, do you get me?"

"You think Tom Oliphant sint a man here to blow you all up wid a bomb?"

"*Think* it? Why, I just about *know* it!"

Peggy looked appealingly at Anne—at Kimbalton; they read her mute question, and nodded a mute reply. Both seemed sorry. But how discredit such evidence? That she herself might also be under suspicion never occurred to her. Her mind was busy with a fugitive—so busy that she was not even surprised, as she might well have been, at her sympathy going after him, the fleeing stranger, instead of pouring itself out on these tried friends who had made so narrow an escape from death or at least horrible injury.

Of the little group, Anne was the only one who could get a sufficient sense of detachment to feel herself a spectator rather than a participant. She wondered at many things, but chiefly at Burns' attitude towards the Italian. He talked as if he knew the captive could not understand English. *Did* he know? Was that why he made no attempt to question his prisoner? Yet, Anne thought, she could detect a comprehending gleam in the Italian's eyes. She wondered that Burns did not see it—wished she knew how to tell him. How he would have loved it if she had! This

man always insisted that there was no mystery about his methods. He laughed at "criminal types" and "degenerate characteristics," and all such lingo. His was a perfectly simple business of reading human nature; the man who had a wide reading to call upon came the nearest to being able to interpret the human nature of the immediate puzzle—that was all! He read Anne's bewilderment as she did *not* read his purpose. And he would have been glad if he could have told her his almost ludicrously simple little plan of action, so that she might have the interest of watching how it worked. But he knew no way to do this.

Peggy looked from the Kimbaltons with their sorry glances to the Italian who, the more she studied him, began to seem vaguely familiar. She could not place him, and yet the impression that she had seen him before grew stronger.

"Why don't you ask him?" she cried. "*He* knows who sint him here!"

Burns smiled. "D'you suppose he'd tell? And besides, *we* know! Ah, ha! I think we have your young friend now."

There were sounds of footsteps on the front stoop; then a ring, which Burns answered, admitting a policeman and Tom.

“There was an order to git this young fella an’ bring him here,” the officer said to Burns.

Tom stared at the assembled company; and when he saw Peggy, his cheeks flamed and he shut his eyes because they were brimming. He was not unmanly. He was a boy in a trap,—a pitiable, powerless thing—and in a trap, no creature however valiant can fight. His brief bravado was gone. If she had not been there, he might have been sullenly enduring. But the sight of her distress was too much for his composure.

“Well, sir,” Burns addressed him, “you are a shrewder rascal than I thought—and it isn’t your fault that I am here to tell you so.”

His glance roved significantly from the gas-pipe bomb and its unlighted fuse to the Italian—so significantly that Tom could not fail to catch the implication.

“You think I sent him here to set off that thing?” Tom cried.

“Who else could have sent him?” Kimbalton interposed, scathingly.

Peggy’s lips quivered piteously, and she laid hold of Andrew Kimbalton beseechingly with her two tiny hands, reddened and roughened.

“You don’ belave it?” she entreated.

"He *couldn't* do it! Why, there couldn't be a man that mane! He had hard feelin's in his heart agin you 'count of his pa goin' inner-cent to jail, an' you wouldn't try to save him. But that was because you didn't know. Whin you thought he was jist anny poor, fri'n'less boy, you was kin' to him an' give him a job. He seen you wasn't mane by intintions—but on'y jist whin you didn't know. How could he want to do such a tur'ble thing to you? God don't make min that black in the soul!"

"They make *themselves* that black!" Kimbalton retorted, glancing at the Italian and then at Tom. "Don't be a fool, Peggy. Look at that thing," indicating the bomb, "and try to tell me there's anything too fiendish for some men to do."

Peggy turned to the Italian. He had seen nothing but rage and loathing in any face but hers since Burns' grip of steel was laid on his arm; her look was full of appealingness, of sad bewilderment as if she felt sure he had a better nature than his wretched plight would indicate.

His eyes shone with a grateful gleam.

"Why did you do it?" she entreated, struggling with her tears.

He turned away, as if lest his eyes speak, denying the control he kept on his tongue.

“You can take your prisoner away,” Burns said to the officer. “Book him on conspiracy with intent to kill. I’ll be there directly. Send the wagon for this man.”

Sobbing, Peggy thrust at Tom his mother’s letter. “I got you into this,” she said, brokenly; “an’, somehow, I’ll git you out.”

Then she hid her face in the crook of her arm, and would not see him taken away.

Tom took the letter and reached out as if he would have touched her, then turned hastily towards the door and said to his captor: “Come on—I can’t stand this.”

Anne wept, and her father looked miserably uncomfortable. Only Burns seemed unmoved: he knew he must be cruel to be not kind but just. He nodded imperatively to the officer; and an instant later, the door closed on captor and captive.

XIX

In Which a Penny of Little Peg's Is Paid Back With Interest

BURNS' searching gaze never left the face of the Italian.

"Peggy," he said, "I'm sorry ; but I'm afraid I've got to hold you, too ——"

Anne made a gesture of indignant protest, but the detective did not heed her.

"——until we get this thing settled. You got Mr. Kimbalton to hire this boy ; you took the message that sent Oliphant after the infernal machine ; you had agreed to keep it in your shop till called for ; you knew that Oliphant had a fancied grievance against Mr. Kimbalton—that he had written Mr. Kimbalton harsh letters. Mr. Kimbalton was an old acquaintance of yours—I might almost say an old friend ; his daughter was a new friend ; they liked you, and it seemed as if you might reasonably have liked them ; as if, when they or their interests were threatened with dynamite, you would have thought first of warning, of protecting them. This Oliphant boy says he is a stranger to you. Yet when he is

arrested for trying to destroy them, you cry heart-brokenly, instead of being glad they are safe. I could go on—but I won't. Can you explain these things, Peggy? Can you tell me any reason why you should not be held as an accomplice?"

He spoke gently, regretfully, even sadly. Peggy stared at him, horrified. When he finished, she blushed scarlet. There was only one reason, and she couldn't tell it; but if she could, what extenuation would it seem?

"Why, Mr. Burns, this is absurd!" Anne Kimbalton cried. "Father! tell him you can't allow it."

Burns turned towards her angrily. "I must use my judgment, Miss Kimbalton, not yours—or retire from the case."

"That's right, Anne," her father interposed. "I feel as bad as you do. But we've got shrewd rascals to fight, and we can't be sentimental—*they're* not! Perhaps Peggy thought she was justified—but I wish she had played me fair and square, even as an enemy. It might have left me some faith in human nature. Come, Anne; we'll get out of here before that patrol wagon comes."

He turned away, and Anne with a sorrowful look at Peggy was about to follow him, when the Italian cried out: "No!"

It was a pity that none of them could read the expression that flashed in Burns' eyes for an immeasurably small fraction of a second ; but they were looking at the hitherto-mute captive.

"No!" the Italian cried imploringly. "Not penny girl!"

He fumbled at his breast pockets, unconscious that he might be suspected of feeling for a dirk, and took out a dirty envelope, from which he drew, tenderly, a pressed and faded flower.

"Luckee day!" he said, holding it out to Peggy—with a smile she knew, suddenly.

"Oh!" she cried; "*that's* who you are! An' did I bring you to this luck, *too*?"

"No! No!" his look darkened; "not you."

She handed back the faded flower; but he would not take it.

"No help bambini now!" he cried; and drew from the envelope a little photograph—of two Italian babies, one of whom he had never seen.

"What does he mean?" Kimbalton asked Peggy.

"He manes," she answered, dashing the back of her rough little hand at her brimming eyes, "that the flower can't help his babies

now. I raymimber him : he wint by my place wan day a good while ago, an' he had a look about him that made me heart ache—the kin' of a look a dog has, sometimes, whin you can't git by him widout pattin' his head an' sayin', 'Nice ol' fella !' 'cause you know that's what he's starvin' fer. I smiled fri'n'ly at this man, here, an' got him into Martinelli's. Martinelli give him coffee an' rolls—he's awful good—an' got out o' him that there was aven worse the matter wid him than starvin' : he was dyin' o' homesickness, too ; he'd left wan baby an' his wife behind, an' another wan'd come since he wint away. He thought he could sind fer thim—but he hadn' no job, an' I guess they seemed a million miles away. So I helped Martinelli hunt where they was advertisin' fer section han's, an' then I took me penny fer that day an' bought a bit of a red flower an' pinned it on our fri'nd, an' made him smile, an' told him it was his lucky day. An' by an' by Martinelli got a pos'-card sayin' he," nodding towards the captive, "had got a job, an' was kapein' the little flower—fer to help him bring over—the bambini,"—the look on the Italian's face was too much for her ; she could not go on, so she tried to turn it off on herself with a bit of her pathetic raillery. "I got

rayson to think small o' meself as a mascot," she finished—her mouth twitching.

"You've got reason to think *great* of yourself as a mascot," Burns corrected; "for if it hadn't been for you, probably none of us would have been alive by this time."

"Hadn' been fer me?" she echoed, blankly.

"For you and your penny flower; that's why he stopped you, or tried to. It didn't mean anything to him that the thing he was to do would blow other people to a horrible death—he hadn't seen us; he couldn't feel our love of life, our right to live, the grief that our deaths would cause; so he agreed to set a lighted match to a twisted string, and go away. Perhaps he was to get money for it to bring over the *bambini*. God! that's the way things turn out in this queer world.

. . . But you! You had been kind to him—he couldn't hurt you—isn't that it?"

He turned to the dynamiter, who nodded assent.

"This doesn't alter any of the things I said, Peggy," Burns went on. "But I guess it ought to alter the situation for you. Mr. Kimbalton would probably not want you locked up——"

Kimbalton almost glared at him. "I should say *not!*" he declared. "Peggy

knows whether she is glad she saved our lives or not; but the thing there can be no doubt of is that *we're* glad she saved them. And by George! this is the last time I want to be mixed up in scenes of justice for the wrong-doer. If it's full of these strange complications, I'm glad it's no part of my business to see that justice is done. I'll leave that to you fellows who have no sentiment." He was quite irascible at Burns, as if the latter had needlessly dragged him into a harrowing situation.

"Humph!" said Burns—replying to the charge of having no sentiment.

"If I kin go," Peggy ventured, "I better be doin' it—it mus' be gittin' pas' five o'clock."

In her hand she still held the little flower.

"Give me that, Peggy," Kimbalton said, reaching for it.

She laid it in his outstretched palm.

"I—I'll try to make it up *somehow* to the *bambini*," he murmured—not trusting himself to look at the father of the *bambini*, but turning away sharply.

Peggy looked from one to the other—then sobbed aloud.

"Oh, God! Why d'you l'ave people git in such tur'ble trouble jest from not knowin' wan another till 'tis too late?"

XX

In Which Burns Disclaims, and Explains

BURNS smiled and shrugged. "Wonderful? Well, it's wonderful to me to hear a baby talk French—because I can't do it. It's a matter of experience—this job of mine. Peggy said the Italian tried to stop her from coming in. What does that mean? To you, nothing; to me, a lot, because I've had a fairly comprehensive experience with dynamiters and their sentiments. There was the fellow in 'Frisco who was perfectly willing to stand by and let Spreckels and me and our families be blown to atoms for prosecuting the graft investigation, but who couldn't bear to have Fremont Older injured, because Older had once done him a trifling kindness—and forgotten about it; the fellow warned Older, and we nipped the whole scheme. Another fellow who was told off to light a fuse under a house where fifteen men were at work, in order that one man of the fifteen might 'get his,' was without compunction about killing fourteen heads

of families who had no connection with the graft investigation, but balked when the appointed time came, because the wife of one of the workmen had just gone into the building with her two little girls. 'I could go on—but I won't. If that Italian tried to stop Peggy, it meant that he had some instructions or some sentiment about her. It might have been instruction—that was my first thought. Then, that began to seem more and more unlikely, as I put this and that together; so I tried for the sentiment—got it in the way the dumb creature looked when I seemed to be drawing Peggy into the net. 'If I drag her in far enough, I'll get him,' I told myself. You see, I had to go pretty far before he broke. She felt awful bad about that young fellow; but the dago didn't get that, or it didn't quite get him. But when he realized that she was under arrest, too—well, I suppose he had a mental picture of the news stand minus Peggy and her smile and her penny, and it all connected up, somehow, in his mind with the *bambini* he would never see—and that was his breaking point. That's all. The mediævals used the thumb-screw and the rack and the iron boot to bring men to the breaking-point. When we got a little bit too nice for that, we used the

third degree. You don't need either, unless you're a bungler. I've never yet met with a man I couldn't understand by putting myself in his place."

Kimbalton stared. "You don't say!" he exclaimed. "Well! we live and learn—God be praised! It seems to me that till I die, whenever I know of dreadful things happening between man and man, I'll hear ringing in my ears that heart-broken appeal of little Peg: 'Oh, God! Why d'you l'ave people git in such tur'ble trouble jest fer want o' knowin' wan another?'"

Burns nodded. "Maybe you think a man in my business don't have occasion to echo that!"

"I wouldn't be in your business for anything in the world," Kimbalton replied.

"No?" dryly. "Well, a good many people seem to feel that way. But of course, I feel the same way about *your* business. You create conditions for thousands; I only wrestle with the occasional one who has let conditions throw him."

The men were in Kimbalton's library—perhaps it were more exact to say in the library of Kimbalton's house. It was a room he made considerable use of, but the books in it were a mere part of its scheme of dig-

nity and decorum; Kimbalton was not a bookman.

It was Sunday night, and the excitement of the preceding day was somewhat abated. Luigi Ferucci, with the picture of the *bambini* in his pocket, was in a cell in the Desplaines Street station, awaiting his preliminary arraignment on Monday morning. And Tom Oliphant, with his mother's letter of congratulation in his pocket, was in an adjoining cell—adjoining, so that if they attempted any communication with each other, they could be overheard. For Luigi had lapsed into dogged dumbness again, after being taken to the station; and the mystery of who sent him to the Lucy Kimbalton house with that bomb remained unexplained. The Sunday papers were full of the sensation, though there were some phases of it that had been successfully guarded from the young men of the press. What got out was: that Burns and Kimbalton, in conference in the old Kimbalton home on the West Side, had surprised Ferucci in the act of laying a bomb to blow them up; and that suspicion of having sent Ferucci there was directed to Thomas Oliphant, "a young man whose grievance against Kimbalton on his father's account is supposed to have made him a ready dupe

for the disgruntled workers." This was read "down state" almost as soon as in Chicago; Tom's mother could not even know that her letter had reached her boy.

There was no one to tell of Peggy's presence on the scene, unless Ida or Katie, who did not know the outcome of her part in it, should chance to tell some of their acquaintances that she was there. Peggy had been glad to promise that she would tell nothing and also that she would enjoin secrecy on Alma. That closed one source of information to the inquisitorial reporter, despoiled Petie of the sensation of his life, but spared Peggy as well as serving Burns. Anne Kimbalton was particularly grateful for the turn of events that made it possible to keep Peggy, for a time at least, out of the horrid spotlight. It even so chanced that her own presence was not discovered and, so, not discussed. But to-morrow morning's hearing would drag forth some things, no doubt; and no one could be sure that they might not be the things most desirable to keep quiet.

"I wish," Kimbalton said, ignoring after a moment's pause Burns' last remark, "we could learn the truth about that young Oliphant."

He had the inclination to petulance of the

man who is seldom balked ; and he seemed almost as if he would imply that Burns ought to be able to find that truth.

"I wish we could!" the detective concurred, heartily. "I only hope that, if all else fails and we have to bring him to trial, he'll be able to clear himself. But it isn't always easy to prove innocence. His father couldn't do it."

"Do you think he was innocent?"

"I think he was."

Kimbalton got up and began to pace. That was an ugly thought to endure. Not because he had *done* anything to bring injustice to an innocent man but because he had done nothing to prevent it. Kimbalton was beginning to have an acute social conscience.

"Do you think the boy did what we've jailed him for?"

"I don't know. I wish I did! I believe it is quite possible for circumstantial evidence, as strong as that against him, to be entirely false and misleading. My study of human nature doesn't make that boy out a deliberate dynamiter—one who would carry vindictiveness to the awful lengths of murder. But I work in the interests of the law-abiding—for their protection. I can't let that boy

loose in the community until I know that he's a reasonably safe creature to be abroad among his kind. Of course, I may have my own theories about there being unmolested members of society who are worse for their fellows than dynamiters; but I am not free to act on my theories—I am under the law, like all the rest of the world. This thing we're trying to ferret out is not a personal but a social grievance; the decision as to those two men is not up to you because your life and property were threatened, but up to the community which may or may not want those two men loose in its midst."

"By Jove!" cried Andrew Kimbalton, "the whole thing's too complex for me."

"I have one hope," Burns said, rising to go; "one little hope." He smiled. "No, I won't tell it," he went on, answering the question in Kimbalton's look. "If it works out, you'll know. And if it doesn't, you won't be disappointed."

XXI

In Which Anne Tells Her Dream

WHEN Burns was gone, Anne came in. She was eager for news, to hear all he had said ; and she had other things she wanted to talk over with her father.

"Dad," she began, getting around to this matter of her own, "of course Peggy saved our lives——"

"Of course she did !"

"And we want to do something for her to express our gratefulness."

"Of course !"

"Have you thought of anything?"

"No ; I'll leave that to you."

"I knew you would ! And I've been trying to think."

"Well——?"

She laughed. "It was funny. I tried to think of all the things that we could do for little Peg—and I couldn't think of one of the usual things that it seemed to me she might care for. If we gave her money, I'm not at all sure that she'd take it. But if she did take

it, I'm quite sure what would become of it: Polly would get most of it for folderols, and Petie would get the rest for 'shows' at the Academy. If we bought Peggy something, what could we buy her? She can't wear good clothes—her work would spoil them, and they would spoil her. A gold watch would be silly on dear little Peg, and if burglars didn't get it, Polly would. And wouldn't it be wicked to try to do her a kindness that would take her out of the 'imporium' where she does such a world of good?"

"It would!"

"For she can do what I can't do, no matter how I try. I mean to work with her all she'll let me; but I don't know in just what way it will be. The more I think about it, the more I seem to see that Peggy doesn't need me or anything I have or can do. But I need her!"

Andrew Kimbalton shook his head uncomprehendingly. Anne need not expect him to understand how there could be a human creature that did not need her or what she could give and do.

"The biggest thing that can happen to Peggy, or to her world, is to let her be as she is," Anne went on. "Yet think how cheap and miserable I feel when I say that!"

I've thought of giving Peggy a fund to draw on—then I remembered how she had refused your offer of a dollar a day; and I can see that she is right. Do you know something, Daddy Kimbalton: there is hardly any way in the world to *give* people things and do it right. The only justice is to let them *earn* enough! Maybe you can't come to it. I suppose it upsets all your training. But I'm going to train for it! I'm ashamed to look at myself in the glass—I've got so much that I don't need and that I can't seem to give away. I'll keep doing what I can, every day, as dear little Peggy says. But I shan't try to believe that I'm doing *all* I can till Ida Levin and Katie Scyzmanska and Alma Petersen don't need anything from me but my friendship, just as I need theirs."

Anne was very lovely in her earnestness. Andrew Kimbalton was moved by the beauty and ardour of his child rather than by the vision she was seeing. He smiled tenderly at her—an almost worshipful smile. Her youth, her enthusiasm, were the most precious things in all the world to him. He drew her to him and kissed her. No lover would ever give her a kiss so reverent, so adoring, so wistful for her happiness.

And Anne, as she nestled close to him, her

head against his breast, went on with her dreaming for a while, her fancies fed by the fire into which they were both staring—and seeing so-different things!

“Dad,” she said, presently, “will you ever forget little Peg yesterday when she stood there in grandmother’s parlour and looked from you and the faded flower to Ferucci and the picture of the *bambini*, and just cried out to God, heart-brokenly, about the pity of people not knowing one another better? If you had known about the babies in Italy, how quick you would have been to help him send for them! And if he could have known the great, big, kind, tender heart of you, he *never* would have consented to try to kill you with that awful bomb. And now, when you know, it is too late to help! He’s the state’s prisoner, now—and your forgiving him won’t do him any good. We’ve got to be friendly before it gets too late! Now, you listen while I tell you the one thing I’ve thought of that we might do for Peggy—perhaps it’ll lead to a bigger thing some day when we all understand one another better. I want to start a little club, and call it The Peggy Club—for girls—for Alma and Ida and Katie and their friends, and for Peggy and me—just a friendship club, a place to go and get better ac-

quainted. I can't have it here, of course—the girls wouldn't come; nor even in grandmother's house, as I tried to. And when Peggy has it in her shop or kitchen, as she does now—it isn't a club now, but it amounts to the same thing—it means that neither she nor Polly can have private callers, because there are always some of the girls there. Peggy is beginning to worry about Polly, because Polly has no place to entertain her friends. And some of these days Peggy will be wanting a chance at her own kitchen for her own courting, I'm thinking. So I want to rent the floor above Peggy's, and fix it up a little, as the girls would like it, and have it for a place where girls can go and have pleasant, friendly times. I think the matter with your girls' club out at the Works is, it's too big: *you* don't have happy, intimate times when you have to go to great, public banquets or to receptions. And girls that have worked hard all day don't want to exercise in a gymnasium or listen to a lecture on the Land of the Midnight Sun, any more than *you* want to play hand-ball or hear 'Die Götterdämmerung.' You've tried the way that some one proposed to you. Do you mind if I try the way I've thought out for myself?"

"No, no! go ahead! Feel your own way—that's the only real progress. And whether your dear little scheme helps anybody else or not, it can't fail to help you. *Try*, sweetheart—when you believe in a thing, *try* it; and if it fails, or you fail, try something else. *Keep trying*—that's life! People wonder why I go on making money when I can't use what I have. Fools! Don't they know it isn't the money? What am I to do with the energy, the insight, the experience I've developed in all these years? When I see a thing that commends itself to my judgment and stirs my fighting blood, I've *got to go after it*—or die! I haven't left you much to fight for, in one way. You've got a job on your hands to find things to go after. When you've found something that appeals to you, keep after it—and God make it hard to overtake!"

XXII

In Which Peggy Unconsciously Makes Out a Case For Tom

"I DON'T care to go over there—it would make the thing look too important. Just tell her that young Oliphant wants to see her. I guess that won't be stretching the truth, either. Be as casual as you can."

"All right, sir."

Officer Keegan of the Desplaines Street station started for Peggy's "imporium," and Burns sat back in the captain's office and discussed the case, and the conduct of the prisoners. That is to say, the captain discussed them, and Burns listened and assented.

It was about nine-thirty when Keegan came back with Peggy. She seemed surprised to see Burns.

"Oliphant didn't ask to see you, Peggy," Burns told her. "But I knew it would do him good. He's awful despondent. See if you can't cheer him up a little bit."

Peggy looked as bankrupt of cheer as any

one had ever seen her ; but she smiled her wistful, crooked little smile.

"What'll I tell him?" she asked, pathetically. "That jail's a gran' place to be? That he naden't be bothered wid huntin' no job, or payin' no board bill? That he'll aven git his hair cut free, an' a fine fancy suit o' clo'es, an' kin live in a cage like a canary?"

Her face twitched as she drew this picture ; one does not live long where Peggy lived without hearing tales of "the pen." She turned, and dashed the tears away with the back of her little hand.

Burns liked Peggy, even though he could not be quite sure of certain things about her ; but he was not sorry to see her cry—just now.

"If he can prove where he was while he was out of the Kimbalton house, and can give a good reason why he left it so uncere- moniously, he'll get off to-morrow after his preliminary hearing. If he can't, of course he'll be held for trial. A great deal depends on to-morrow morning. That's why I thought it might be a good plan for you to talk with him. When any of us try to tell him what's for his own good, he gets sullen and suspicious."

"Ain't it quare," Peggy cried, wrathfully,

"that he'd git mistrus'ful of you? He must have an awful villainous nature!"

Burns laughed. "Don't fly off the handle, Peggy," he entreated. "Try to think of this a little from Mr. Kimbalton's point of view. He's just about as anxious to see that youngster cleared as *you* are! And I think he means to have the father's case looked into. You're not an unreasonable girl. Why can't you take a calm view of this? Nobody wants Oliphant involved. Everybody'll be glad to see him cleared. But you can see that we've got to get some accounting for his movements. Try to persuade him that this is no 'frame-up'—get him to make an effort and clear himself."

Peggy listened. Burns' manner was frank and convincingly sincere. It was true: if Tom was "up against it," at least he was not held without what might well seem to any one sufficient reason.

"Of course," Burns went on, "I know Oliphant is being played for a dupe. But I can't tell just how blind he is: whether he knows what he's doing, or doesn't know."

"I could tell you that!" she cried.

He smiled. "Telling me isn't going to do any good," he reminded her. "This thing isn't up to me—it's up to the State's

Attorney." And he explained to her, as he had always to be explaining to some one, that he was no agent of private vindictiveness, but a man who sought to serve the laws of the commonwealth.

"I'll try," she said.

Tom was sitting with his head in his hands, when she stopped before his cell-door. It was quiet in the lockup: Saturday night's drunks were sobered, and Sunday night's had not begun to come in. Tom heard the little, inarticulate sound of distress that Peggy made. He raised his head, and stared. It might be Peggy herself, or it might be only another vision of her. She tried to smile; but the tears would come.

"I—came to see you," she faltered.

He was ashamed to whine, and attempted a bit of raillery. "And I can't even ask you to sit down," he replied.

"I can't stay long," she answered. "I jest come to see, couldn' I maybe cheer you up a little. But I—I guess I don't know how."

"I guess nobody knows how," he said; "except that it's something to *see* you. If I have any comfort at all, it's in thinking that *you* don't believe what they're trying to make out against me."

"Of course I don't!" she cried. "An'

Mr. Burns says I'm to tell you that nobody *wants* to belave thim things. He says Mr. Kimbalton'll be almost as glad as—as I will—if you kin jest satisfy thim that you wasn't in the plot. They're hopin' you kin do it to-morrow mornin', so you won't be held for no trial."

"Do you believe that?"

"Sure I belave it! I kin see there's been a lot of awful mistakes; but why would I belave they'd want to make trouble fer you, anny more than I'd belave you'd want to make trouble fer thim? Some wan have been makin' a goat o' you, an' we gotta find out who it is. It began Friday avenin', wid me gittin' that quare kin' o' message on the tillyphone. I didn' see it then, but I see it now. An' Mr. Burns says some wan sint word to him that if he'd come to my place about tin o'clock, he'd fin' you wid the goods on. Now, we know there wasn't anny wan that could 'a' done that except the fella that tillyphoned me. But how kin we prove it?"

"We can't," he answered, bitterly.

"An' you couldn' git no wan to swear where you was after you left that house?"

"How could I? I was getting away as fast as I could go."

"It's such a pity you wint!"

"Oh, I don't know! If I'd stayed, they'd have said I sent for the dynamiters to come and blow me up."

"He was havin' you watched, he said; he'd know you didn' do that."

He was silent for a moment, then he laughed. "Do you know," he said, "I have only the faintest idea of what this dynamiting is all about. Everything in the world I know about it is what Mr. McNabb told me in Martinelli's, on Thursday morning. He pointed out Burns to me and said it was reported that Burns was on the Kimbalton dynamite case. I didn't even know what that was—and he told me. He said Burns was a deep one, and nobody ever finds out what he's about. That's the only time I ever heard him or anybody mention it. And I've never been interested in labour troubles—so I ain't likely to pay much attention to them in newspapers. I don't even know who I'm supposed to be mixed up with. They don't tell me anything—they just *ask* me."

"I dunno much about thim mesilf," Peggy declared. "I niver rade nothin' about 'em in the papers; it's all so mixed up: wan says 'Tis' an' wan says 'Tain't,' an' there you are! But there's been an awful lot o' talk 'round our place to-day, an' o' course our

Petie's jest about crazy wid excitement. He don't know about me bein' in it yeste'day. But he knows Burns was to our place Friday avenin', an' you was pinched there; an' I'm havin' all I kin do to kape him from tellin' it—because Mr. Burns wants to kape me out of it as long's he kin."

"I wonder why?"

"That I don' know. But he was anxious fer it not to git out about it bein' on account o' me the dago wouldn' light his fuse."

Peggy stopped short and clapped her hand to her mouth.

"I forgot!" she cried. "You didn' know that: it was after you was took away. Oh! I'm sorry I said annything."

"On account of you?" he repeated, blankly. "Did *you* know him?"

"It seems I did," she answered. "But whin you was there I couldn' raymimber it. *He* thought of it—the poor fella!"

"*Poor* fellow!" he echoed, wrathfully.

"*Sure* he's a poor fella," she contended; "an' my heart's heavy fer him. Some wan have got him into this, jest like they have got you."

He flared, angrily. "Do you think any one could get me into putting a bomb under a house and blowing people to death?" he cried.

"No," she answered; "you'd know how tur'ble it was, an' you wouldn't do it; I guess they had to use you widout lettin' you find it out. But he's dif'runt. Mr. Burns was tellin' me hōw 'tis a man kin do a thing like that an' not really mane no harm; how he kin git to thinkin' o' the money he's goin' to git, an' bringin' over the *bambinos*, an' niver have room in his mind fer to think o' what's goin' to happen to *other* folks after he lights his match."

"He was kidding you!" the boy cried. "There couldn't be such a fool."

"I belave him," she retorted. "I can't belave there could be such a *divil*—until I think o' the one that planned all this an' got you two into it! An' I s'pose if you could know his mind, you'd find that he had it all raysoned out that it wasn't wrong fer him to do."

"Well, I'd like to have a chance to tell him a thing or two!" the boy said, vengefully. "If there's a devil in the world, or anywhere, it's the fellow who makes dupes of the innocent and unsuspecting, and lets them suffer for his sins. If I ever get out of this, I'll find the man who got me into it, if I have to give my life up to it; and I won't wait for any law to deal with him—I'll do it myself!"

Peggy looked distressed. "Now, don't you go on an' talk like that whin they bring you to court in the mornin'," she entreated; "or they'll be kapein' you locked up fer a dang'rous man that's likely to be killin' annybody he has a grievance wid. What you're to tell thim is that you ain't niver seen that dago but the wan time—whin they brought you to him——"

He laughed, mockingly. "And of course they'll believe me!"

"Well, I've 'em prove dif'runt if they kin. An' don't git grouchy, thinkin' it's no use to difind yersilf. Spake up an' tell all you know. Try to raymimber where you wint yeste'day——"

"How can I?" he interrupted. "I wasn't noticing where I was going; it was all strange to me. All I knew was that I was getting away from Halsted Street, and from Madison, and trying to get away from everybody I had ever seen. It just came to me all of a sudden that I'd go. At first, I thought there was no use putting up any fight—they were after me, and they'd get me. Then—I guess it was the book I had been reading all morning—I got game, all of a sudden. 'Somebody's got to fight these fellows,' I said to myself, 'or they'll get to

where they were before the French Revolution, when they could clap a man in jail if they didn't like him, and keep him there till he rotted, and nobody that belonged to him could even find out where he'd gone.' Seemed like something inside me just *boiled*—and so I ran. I might have known better!"

"I wish you had!" she sighed. "But that can't be helped now. If you had of stayed there, they'd *know* that somebody besides you knew about that house, an' about Burns an' Mr. Kimbalton bein' there. I dunno why the fella that tillyphoned me an' sint you on that chase, an' give the word to Burns where he could find you, couldn' have been watchin' to see where he took you ——"

She stopped short. "Petie!" she said, forcing her mind back over the events of Friday evening. "Whin he come in, jest before Mr. Burns come, he told me our place was bein' watched. I didn' pay no 'tention to him at the time, because he's always sleuthin'. But why couldn' that of been the fella that was to see where you was took?"

"I suppose it was," he answered, eagerly. "But how can we prove it?"

"Well, we kin tell Mr. Burns—an' I bet he kin prove it!" Peggy cried.

XXIII

In Which Luigi Keeps On Sayin' Nothin', Like the Tar Baby

AS Peggy stepped back from where she had been standing, close to the bars of Tom's cell door, she saw a familiar face in the adjoining cell. It was a tragic face, deep-written with the marks of despair and suffering. Luigi had recognized her voice the moment she spoke to Tom; but cowered back out of sight because he was beginning to realize in his dumb-animal way that he was bringing grave trouble on this young man and sorrow to the dear little "Penny girl," because he dared not tell who sent him to Lucy Kimbalton's house. "The man" (Burns) had told him so; and Luigi's heart was wrung—but what could he do? The warning delivered to him had been adequate: let the *carabinieri* do what they might, it could not be so dreadful by half as what would happen to him if he told who sent him to light that fuse. And Luigi, it must be remembered, had a hereditary terror of private vengeance exceeding by far his fear

of the police: the *carabinieri* often missed you—the *Camorra* or *Amafia* or the Black Hand, never! Which was the reason he and his kind were so frequently employed to bear the brunt of situations like this.

He could hear snatches of what Tom and Peggy said; but they talked in low tones, standing as close together as the grating would allow; and even if Luigi had been able to hear more, much of their talk would have been unintelligible to him. He was not alert enough to try to hear, or to understand. His pathetic, dog-like mind travelled in a small round from the *bambini* to his present plight, and back again to the *bambini*. About his defense, or what was to become of him, he had no more power to think than a cur seized by the dog-catcher and thrust into the terror-inspiring wagon for the pound. The variety of his fears was as limited as the variety of his sentiments, but both were intensive to a degree. Peggy was probably the only sentiment he had developed since he left Italy; she had entered his starving heart with a smile, and a bright posy, and an appeal to his ready belief in signs and tokens. He would have done a great deal to help to spare her; but he dared not. For those who punish secretly strike where the

blow hurts most—on the *bambini* in Italy, if they think that will stab most cruelly. So Luigi's lips were locked.

He shrank back when he saw Peggy. And she, too, was dumb; not knowing what to say. For she could not forget that she had trapped him. And, somehow, not even remembering the desperate need that he be caught helped her to like any better the way she had requited his regard for her. As she looked at him and read the despair in his face, she covered her face with her tiny hands and wept.

Luigi came close to the bars of his cell. "Poor penny-girl!" he sobbed.

Peggy laid one arm against the bars, and buried her head in it. Her childish form shook with grief.

"No, no!" the Italian entreated.

She lifted her head and tried to dry her tears with her coarse little cotton handkerchief.

"You ought to hate me," she cried.

Luigi, not understanding what she meant, made no reply.

"You try save me," Peggy went on, endeavouring to make herself clear, "an' I help catch you. I fale very bad fer you an' fer *bambinos*. But must save good, kind fri'nds. Can you understan'? Can you forgive?"

He nodded. At least he knew "forgive," It had not occurred to him that Peggy helped to trap him; it was not at all clear to him now. But she seemed to be pleading for something; and he nodded reassuringly.

"Poor penny-girl!" he repeated, trying to express his sorrow that he could not help her further. And Peggy, interpreting it according to her own thoughts, was moved by his lack of resentment.

"Ye're a gentler soul 'n me," she murmured, "fer *all* yer dynamitin'! If you had of done it to me, after me savin' you, I'd have cussed you from here to Ballyhickon."

As she moved back, she could see both men she knew, each in a strong-barred cell.

"My lan'!" she sobbed, turning away. "Whin I see where the two o' thim has got to, through knowin' me, I dunno how I kin bear it."

XXIV

*In Which Peggy Figures Like a Heroine of
High Romance •*

UP-STAIRS, in the captain's office, a young man sat writing rapidly in a stenographic note-book. Burns and the captain and one or two others looked on with strained attention.

The moments were tense with drama ; for, down-stairs, little Peg was making history—helping to write the first chapter in the criminal records of the dictagraph, a device which promises to revolutionize the sphere of evidence. Every word she spoke, every word spoken to her, was transmitted from the skillfully concealed recording disc to the receiver up-stairs, and written down in the presence of witnesses including a notary.

What worth the dictagraph may have when wrong-doers have begun to suspect its presence and to talk to it, mendaciously—reserving their real sentiments for expression only on tramps in the open country—is hard to determine now. But there could be no suspicion of disingenuousness in Peggy or

Tom, neither of whom had ever heard of such an instrument.

"For this case, it is almost like a miraculous intervention," Burns remarked. "The boy had everything against him, and absolutely no way to prove his innocence. And while we contend that the state must prove guilt, we have to admit that conviction on circumstantial evidence is likely to be as much because the prisoner could not prove his innocence as because the state could infer his guilt. Captain, that boy has suffered far too much for what he did not do. Can't you release him to-night? Parole him to me, or make me responsible for his appearance to-morrow morning so he may be formally discharged by the court?"

The captain looked doubtful. "I don't believe I can, Burns. You see, he's booked for conspiracy with intent to kill. But I'll do what I can: I'll bring him up here and make him as comfortable—in mind and body—as if he was a star witness."

"All right—that'll do. And I don't mind telling you that I haven't been as glad about anything in a long time as I am to see that boy cleared. If he had been implicated, he might have helped me to a clue I need—but I'll get that somehow; and I'm glad it doesn't have to come through him."

When Peggy came up-stairs, Burns was not the only one whose heart beat with grateful gladness because of the joyful surprise that awaited her. She was a pathetic wee thing indeed, with her tear-stained face and her effort to be self-controlled so she could tell Mr. Burns about Petie and the man who watched their shop on Friday night.

"Could I—spake to you?" she entreated.

Burns nodded to the others, and they left.

Then she told him.

He listened, gravely; when she came to Petie's part in it, he smiled.

"You think that's nothin' to go by?" she cried, challengingly.

"I think it's a good deal to go by," he corrected. "I'm smiling to think how pleased Petie will probably be to go on a case with me. And I've got something even better than that to smile about, Peggy. I'm going to hire Petie to tend the 'imporium' to-morrow night, so that young man of yours can take you to a show and celebrate."

"Young man o' mine?"

"Well, if he isn't yours he ought to be. I mean Oliphant. He was in pretty deep—but you've got him out."

"Me?"

• He explained.

Peggy's mouth quivered piteously. "This ain't a trick?" she pleaded.

"I know I deserved that," he admitted. "But when we're trying to be just, Peggy, we must use any means the law allows to get the truth. I don't believe in the third degree—but until somebody invents a mind-reader I guess I'll have to use what you call tricks to surprise people into telling the truth. This is on the level. I only wish it held some hope for that poor devil of a dago."

"Don't it?"

"Not a bit. But we'll try to be grateful for what we've got. Now, I kind of think you've earned the happiness of telling that boy he's cleared. Wait here."

The word brought to Tom was that the captain wanted to see him. But when the door of the captain's office was opened, and he was directed in, only Peggy was there—in evidence.

Police regulations do not permit of all the scruples of polite society.

"According to all the rules," the captain suggested, "that ought to be a regular third act scene for the By-Joe."

Burns smiled. For he could read in the constrained self-consciousness of Tom and little Peg a drama too deep for words.

XXV

In Which You Visit the Peggy Club—and Say Good-Bye

CHRISTMAS had come and gone. Anne was disappointed because the blessed festival could not be celebrated in the Peggy Club. But it takes time, even with the strong urging of much money, not to get people to move out of one tenement into another, but to reconstruct the rooms in accordance with such ideas as Anne had for the new club.

"Christmas never meant anything to me compared with what it does this year," Anne told her father. "The manger and the shepherds were like parts of a pretty story that I loved but didn't really understand. *Now I know!* There was no other way to help.

. . . Peggy has taught me this."

One of the first things she attended to was the *bambini*. Anne spoke Italian fluently and had a passionate love for Italy and her people. She was not easily able to overcome Ferucci's fear, greater for the wife and babies even than for himself, and get him to

give her directions for sending them something to make a merry Christmas. It was to go to them as from him; if he did not want to trust her with the name, he might send the money or get some one to send it. But Luigi had no one who might do so much for him, and finally he consented to give Anne the directions. It was she who took the Italian Consul to see him—for this reason: Anne had suggested to her father that, perhaps, if Ferucci on investigation were shown to be a harmless sort of creature, it might be possible to plead for a suspension of sentence; for his release or parole to her father or to some responsible person acting for Kimbalton. But Ferucci was thrown into a panic at the suggestion. Anne had lived in Italy long enough to understand. She could not, however, believe that his fears were valid in this country. This she asked his consul to assure him. But the consul could not, because he could not know who had threatened Ferucci. Until Burns had finished unravelling a few more mysteries—principally those which concerned McNabb, and Petie's story of what he saw when he followed Burns and Tom on that Friday night and learned that he was not the only one who went to see whither they were bound—Luigi Ferucci was really

better off, and happier, in jail, awaiting the big trial that was imminent. He was made glad by a Christmas letter from home, and by the thought of what the splendid remittance would mean to them.

"Down state," in the Oliphant home, there was real Christmas joy, too; because Andrew Kimbalton had the case of James Oliphant before the Pardon Board. Tom went home for Christmas. But the Kimbaltons exchanged knowing smiles because, although he had been told he might stay till after New Year's, he was back again on the evening of the twenty-sixth.

On Christmas Eve there was a tree in Peggy's kitchen. It wasn't a very big tree, and the fruit it bore was not great in size but it was marvellous in quantity: there seemed to be something on it for "awful many people." When Tony-of-the-wondrous-smile came in to get his "comics," there was something on the glittering tree for him, and there were even other somethings that he might take home, clasped ecstatically against his palpitating little breast. There was something for Alma, and something for Katie and something for Ida—and something for Hazel. Other girls, of whom you have not heard because our little chronicle could not

tell all, found each a bit of a Christmas gift and a lot of Christmas spirit. Petie had been made so inexpressibly exalted by his association with Burns—who found delight in humouring the youngster as much as the desperately serious business in hand would allow—that he was able to take only the most condescending kind of interest in so babyish a thing as a Christmas tree; but the way in which he lent his attention and his help was no small part of the Christmas joy to some folks. Then there was Polly. It seemed as if Anne and Alma between them were going to accomplish for Polly what Peggy in her blind unselfishness had never done. Not without many discouragements, of course! But there was hope. And Peggy, to the delight of Anne and Alma, disclosed a sudden yearning for a pretty dress: one not too pretty to tend shop in, but just pretty enough to—I'm sorry that I can't show you the look on Peggy's face as she tried to explain: the light in her eyes and the flush in her cheeks and the sweet telltale twitching of the corners of her mouth. It seemed to the two girls that there could not be a dress in all the world pretty enough to meet their idea of what little Peg should have. Yet this must be hers in the truest sense of being

her choice; so they made her "help Santa Claus" by selecting just exactly what she wanted.

But after all, Christmas joys were almost overshadowed by what was going on upstairs where the parlour floor of the old house was being transformed for and by the Peggy Club.

The girls worked at it every evening, and Anne gave a great deal of daytime to it. New Year's Eve was to be the "grand opening." And as you get a better understanding of some things in their preparation than in their ready-for-company completeness, I'll ask you in about seven o'clock when an infinitude of last touches are being supplied.

Of course Peggy's in command. But I don't blame you if, at first sight, you hardly know her. Alma has unbraided that tight little braid of bright hair, and fluffed it softly and pinned it up bewitchingly. And Peggy has shining new shoes on those wee feet that twinkle here and there and everywhere all in one superlatively busy second. Then there's the new dress. You can't see it very well, because Peggy has an apron on. But perhaps you wouldn't think it was much of a dress. For it's only a warm flannel, although the shade of green is surprisingly becoming

to Peggy. Anyhow, it has all the things she has ever dreamed about when she had time to dream about clothes: it has silk braid on it, and gold buttons, and a lace collar. And down-stairs in a milk bottle is a big red rose that Peggy's going to wear when the party really begins.

Everybody else is fixed up too; but I don't believe you care about how any of the rest look. You want to see the Peggy Club.

Well, having come up those sagging wooden steps down which poor Alma once went with intent so desperate, you have entered what was once the family hall but is now the common hallway of the tenement. The Peggy Club does not embrace you until you have passed through the door into what was once the family front parlour. It has been newly-papered—as the whole floor has—and you probably groan when you see the paper. Anne nearly did. It is red, and has gilt figures in it that set you wondering what form in art or nature could have been distorted for their production. Never mind! Peggy chose it. And Peggy doesn't have to rack her brain to think what the girls would like: she knows. She is responsible, too, for the Nottingham lace curtains, and for their being white instead of ecru as Anne

ventured to suggest; and for the tasselled "drape" on the shiny new piano; and for the centre table, and the lamp with the red roses on its china globe. And Anne, remembering certain "Mission Parlours" she had seen in Homes and Welfare places, and how they chilled one with their cold air of failure, forebore making a single restraining criticism.

There is an old-fashioned marble mantel, not unlike those in Lucy Kimbalton's home; and they have a new grate for the disused fireplace—all the girls favoured that. There has, of course, to be a stove too: a self-feeder, heavily nickelled. But they like the idea of sitting around an open fire. I won't weary you with too many details, but I'd like you to note the pictures. Alma and Ida spent a Saturday evening on Blue Island Avenue selecting them. One pictures a young man of effeminate beauty, clad in the costume of young Mozart's day and seated at a harpsichord; close beside him, her head leaning on his shoulder, is a young girl in a white dress. Another represents a terrace scene, probably a French chateau, in which two elegantly and fancifully attired young lovers seem to have quarrelled about some elegant and fanciful grievance, and a third party is trying to in-

tervene in the interests of that reconciliation so full of bliss one cannot blame lovers for the quarrels with which they contend for it. Then there are two pictures also with a French chateau flavour, depicting a Wedding and a Christening, in which nobody—if we may judge by clothes—is of rank lower than a Marquis or a Marquise. Ida was strongly in favour of a copy of "The Exiles of Tiberius," but Alma dissuaded her.

Now I know your eye has gone roving, and you are wondering, in a puzzled way, about that back parlour. I don't blame you. What are all those strange little places, like the stalls in an old tap-room? They have no books in them, for the book their occupants will wish to read is the book of the future; no pictures, because the young people who will sit in them will paint their own lovely pictures with which no art in the world can compete. They are the cozy corners wherein, as sufficiently screened from the rest of the world as the sons and daughters of the crowded tenements can expect ever to be, the most precious thing in all the world may be tenderly nurtured instead of being cast into the streets, the saloon dance halls or like places, to grow rank and often noisome.

Can you see Petie? Did you ever see an

expression of such vast inscrutability? From a field position suitable to his generalship he is directing the hanging of the last picture. Tom, on the step-ladder, is glad he can without offense turn his face to the wall and smile when Petie's patronage becomes *too* excruciating.

Polly is absorbed in Andrew Kimbalton's gift, just arrived: a phonograph. She has it playing, "Oh, You Beautiful Doll," and is dancing to the tune—trying its tempo.

Anne is everywhere—now at the front door, persuading the deliveryman to take the dripping ice-cream kegs around to the rear, and now answering Tom's question about the height of the picture, and now showing Polly how to soften the sounds of the phonograph because Peggy pleads that she "can't hear herself think."

Alma is immersed in the commissary, but emerges now and then to ask a question or to comment on some new touch of preparation. Alma's work is hard, and she won't give it up until she has found for herself a better job. She is too jealous of her friendship with Anne to admit anything into it but a fair give and take. But all the old defiance and bitterness are gone. Because hard work doesn't hurt the spirit, and Alma is happy, now—

happy in warm human relationships. Strange that, in a world full of lonely people who need nothing so much as one another, any one should go starving for lack of friendship!

Now here come Ida and Katie. They have got a room together, and Ida is trying to take a sort of responsible care of Katie who has never had care taken of her before.

Katie has brought a donation for the Club. She made it herself, and she is bursting with pride and importance: it is a crocheted tidy for the piano-stool.

"I know it ain't handy to have a tidy there," Ida explains to Peggy, whispering. "It'll get mussed when it's sat on, an' be in the way. But I couldn't tell Katie—she's been so happy makin' it!"

Peggy nods comprehendingly, and lovingly squeezes Ida's arm. "I know. I bet it's the first thing that poor little kid iver done to try an' fix up a place like she fancied it. Say, Ida! whin I look at that tidy I bet I'll a'most cry!"

She does! And Anne Kimbalton goes hastily into one of the little "stalls," her heart so full that for a moment she has to struggle for self-control.

Linger, if you want to, while some come whom you do not know: girls and young men. And keep dry-eyed if you can—I can't!—when Hazel stands with timid boldness in the doorway and is welcomed with a superb lack of such effusiveness as might betray you and me and lose Hazel to us forever. . . .

It is well on past midnight, and the party is over. Alma, in the kitchen, is clearing away the last of the dishes.

In the front room, by the embers of the open fire, sit little Peg and Tom—talking it over.

Never mind what they have been saying. What one *says* at such a time counts for little, anyway. But I think Peg must have murmured something about being up in a little while to get Petie started with his papers. And then I think Tom said something about a day not too distant when he has "made good," and Peggy shall not turn out in dark, chill winter mornings like that on which you first saw her. There is a wonderful look of rapture in her face when he says that; even in the firelight it is plain to see. But presently she shakes her head. Evidently she has tried to think of a life that

has naught to do with the "imporium"—
and she can't.

"Wanst," she says, "I read a piece o'
po'try that I liked awful much. It was about
some wan that says :

" 'L'ave me live in a house by the side of a road,
An' be a fri'nd to man."

An' I kin' of fixed it over fer to suit *me*, like
this :

" 'L'ave me live in me shop on Halsted Strate,
An' be a fri'nd whin I can."

I guess there ain't no spot on earth fer me
but this here corner. An' whin I think o'
heaven I belave I always think o' me there
wid Martinelli on wan side o' me an'
Levinsky on the other."

For a long moment Tom says nothing.
His man's pride is struggling with a very
considerable hurt; for men have not yet
grown used to wooing women who will not
leave their own kingdom but must be loved
where they have made their world.

"And where am I?" he blurts out.

Peggy laughs at his petulance; and as she
rises she bends over and kisses him. In a

way it is a kiss not totally unlike one she might give Petie ; only she does not know this—yet.

“ You’re betwane thim too,” she says.

Ah, well ! he *may* be !

And now, I hope you’re glad—as I am, to leave dear little Peggy in her “shop on Halsted Strate,” still giving her penny a day and looking for opportunities to be a friend when she can.

The usual way with heroines we love is to suggest, in closing, their transplanting to another sphere—one that has been created for them. Can you think of anything you’d rather have for Peggy than that which she has made for herself with her love and her faith and her penny philanthropy ? *I can’t !*

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